

THE PLACE  
WHERE THY GLORY DWELLS





602

13

ALLEN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



3 1833 02720 2636

Gc 974.802 P53FL

THE PLACE WHERE THY GLORY  
DWELLS

✓





*O Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house,  
and the place where Thy glory dwells.*

*—Psalm 26:8*



THE PLACE  
WHERE THY GLORY DWELLS

THE STORY OF  
OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1890 — 1958



Allen County Public Library  
900 Webster Street  
PO Box 2270  
Fort Wayne, IN 46801-2270

Copyright 1958

The Board of Trustees  
Overbrook Presbyterian Church  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania



OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH—1958





THE MANSE—1958



## PREFACE

“A people which takes no pride in the noble achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants.” These words from the pen of the English historian, Macauley, represent an appropriate summary of the inspiration which gave birth to this volume, the spirit which accompanied its preparation, and the hopes which now attend its publication and distribution.

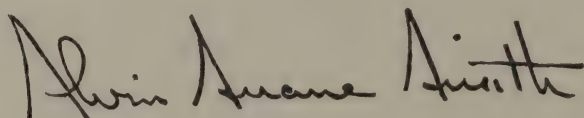
This carefully documented history will serve as a link between today's extensive work of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church, and the interesting past out of which it has grown. Those who have shared in its preparation were led to do so in the belief that the use of history is to give value to the present hour and its duty. Such belief is well expressed in the motto of the Presbyterian Historical Society: *Only the key of yesterday unlocks tomorrow.*

All who read these pages must be impressed by the rich heritage in amount and degree of devotion to Christ and His Kingdom upon which Overbrook Church is built. Many will undoubtedly be led to resolve more fully to live up to the responsibilities imposed by so rich a heritage.

Like the Bible, this book is the work of several writers who have labored at different times, but always under the direction and supervision of a single guiding spirit. Individuals who have contributed toward its

preparation have been acknowledged in the editor's "appreciation." One additional word of appreciation should now be expressed to the editor himself—for he, more than any other individual, is responsible for this book. Overbrook members, present and future, owe to Lester W. Minchin a debt of gratitude for the numerous hours he has invested over a period of many months so that this published history might become reality.

Surely this volume, which notes with pride the achievements of our "remote ancestors," is itself one achievement of the present worthy to be remembered with pride by our "remote descendants."

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Edwin Eugene Smith". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'E' and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

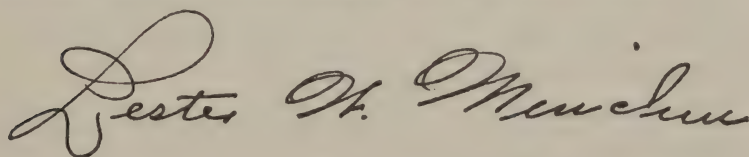
## APPRECIATION

Sincere thanks are extended to the many friends of Overbrook Church who gave unstintingly of their time and talents in assisting in the preparation of this history.

Named in particular:—Miss Jean Louise Smith, Mrs. Theodore Campbell, Jr., Mrs. Charles H. Yardley, Dr. S. Howard Patterson and also Mrs. Robert T. Reeves who devoted many hours to typing.

A debt of gratitude is acknowledged to five members of the retired Business Men's Association who met every Monday morning for over a year and accepted cheerfully any assignment necessary to the compiling of these records:—Edwin B. DeVilbiss, Reuel S. Burr, Justin R. Peters, Ernst Laufer and William R. Conklin.

To all those who assisted, and for the material help and generous co-operation of our Official Committee, I wish to express my deep appreciation.



*Chairman and Editor,  
President, Board of Trustees.*

### *Trustees' Committee*

|                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| LESTER L. LESSIG, <i>Vice-Pres.</i> | IRVIN R. BARTON |
| HAIG H. PAKRADOONI, JR.             | SIDNEY V. YOUNG |

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Verses—Rev. Samuel Longfellow, 1864

*Editor's Note*—In the writing of this book no attempt has been made to enumerate all of the many gifts, bequests and memorials of which the church has been the recipient during its existence. To mention them all would comprise a list of considerable magnitude.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

|   |                         |
|---|-------------------------|
| Overbrook Presbyterian Church—1958 .....          | <i>facing copyright</i> |
| The Manse—1958 .....                              | <i>facing preface</i>   |
| Map—1890 .....                                    | 3                       |
| Membership Charts .....                           | 55, 56                  |
| Wistar Morris .....                               | 57                      |
| Charles R. Erdman .....                           | 58                      |
| George Reynolds .....                             | 59                      |
| Guido Bossard .....                               | 60                      |
| Charles Wadsworth .....                           | 61                      |
| George Emerson Barnes .....                       | 62                      |
| Alvin Duane Smith .....                           | 63                      |
| Guy M. Kinman .....                               | 64                      |
| Original Church—1890 .....                        | 113                     |
| Church and Manse—1892 .....                       | 114                     |
| Chancel and Organ—1905 .....                      | 115                     |
| Chancel—1940 .....                                | 116                     |
| A Typical Wedding .....                           | 117                     |
| George Emerson Barnes Memorial Window—1956 .....  | 118                     |
| Church, Church School and Parking Area—1958 ..... | 119                     |
| War Memorial Window—1949 .....                    | 120                     |
| The Session—1958 .....                            | 123                     |
| The Board of Deacons—1958 .....                   | 127                     |
| The Board of Trustees—1958 .....                  | 131                     |

## CONTENTS.

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| CHAPTER I.   |      |
| The Founders—Wistar Morris and Charles Wood .....    | 1    |
| Something Missing .....                              | 1    |
| This Liberal Offer .....                             | 2    |
| A Church Is Born .....                               | 6    |
| From Farm to City .....                              | 7    |
| CHAPTER II.  |      |
| The Ministry of Charles R. Erdman .....              | 11   |
| The Young Preacher .....                             | 11   |
| The First Family .....                               | 13   |
| Reminiscences of Dr. Erdman .....                    | 14   |
| A Giving Church .....                                | 18   |
| An Outreaching Church .....                          | 19   |
| From Overbrook to Germantown .....                   | 20   |
| Charles R. Erdman's Successor, George Reynolds ..... | 21   |
| A Growing Church and Community .....                 | 21   |
| Resignation of George Reynolds .....                 | 23   |
| CHAPTER III.   |      |
| The Ministry of Guido Bossard .....                  | 25   |
| The Call .....                                       | 25   |
| Music at Overbrook .....                             | 25   |
| Building Program .....                               | 27   |
| Twentieth Anniversary .....                          | 29   |
| Twenty-fifth Anniversary .....                       | 30   |
| During World War I .....                             | 30   |
| From Overbrook to Dubuque .....                      | 31   |
| CHAPTER IV.  |      |
| The Ministry of George Emerson Barnes .....          | 33   |
| The Call and the Man .....                           | 33   |
| Church Membership .....                              | 33   |
| Rebuilding Program .....                             | 34   |
| Impact of the Depression .....                       | 35   |

## CONTENTS (Continued).

|                                       | Page |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| Delegate and Moderator .....          | 37   |
| Revision of Benevolence Program ..... | 37   |
| Plans and Achievements .....          | 38   |
| Fiftieth Anniversary Memorials .....  | 39   |
| Overbrook in World War II .....       | 41   |
| Board of Deacons .....                | 43   |
| Assistants to Dr. Barnes .....        | 43   |
| Dr. Barnes' Last Years .....          | 44   |

### CHAPTER V.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Ministry of Alvin Duane Smith .....             | 47 |
| The Crisis and the Call .....                       | 47 |
| Years of Continued Progress .....                   | 48 |
| Pastoral Statistics and Physical Improvements ..... | 49 |
| Assistant Ministers .....                           | 50 |
| Refugee Resettlement .....                          | 51 |
| Internal Affairs in Retrospect .....                | 51 |
| The Passing of a Patriarch .....                    | 52 |
| Overbrook in Prospect .....                         | 52 |

### CHAPTER VI.

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Church School and Young People's Work ..... | 65 |
| The First Sunday School .....                   | 65 |
| Sunday School Building .....                    | 66 |
| Christmas Entertainments .....                  | 67 |
| Expansion .....                                 | 68 |
| Superintendents Furst and Gray .....            | 70 |
| The New Church House .....                      | 71 |
| Changes in Leadership and Programs .....        | 75 |
| Young People's Work .....                       | 77 |
| Youth Budget .....                              | 77 |
| Youth Work in World War II .....                | 79 |
| Ushers Association .....                        | 80 |
| Revival of Youth Leadership .....               | 80 |



## CONTENTS (Continued).

|   | Page |
|---|------|
| CHAPTER VII.                                      |      |
| Overbrook Church—Abroad and at Home .....         | 83   |
| A Missionary to Siam .....                        | 83   |
| Overbrook Memorial Hospital at Chieng Rai .....   | 83   |
| Dr. Beach Succeeds Dr. Briggs .....               | 85   |
| Impact of World War II on Thailand .....          | 86   |
| Dr. McDaniel Succeeds Dr. Beach .....             | 86   |
| Overbrook Ambulance .....                         | 87   |
| Overbrook Hospital Becomes Self-Supporting .....  | 87   |
| Overbrook in Wyoming .....                        | 87   |
| Mr. Bicksler Goes to Europe and Ohio .....        | 88   |
| Overbrook in West Virginia and Florida .....      | 89   |
| The Second Italian Church of Philadelphia .....   | 89   |
| Missionary Interest Today .....                   | 91   |
| CHAPTER VIII.                                     |      |
| Women's and Men's Organizations .....             | 93   |
| Boxes From Overbrook .....                        | 94   |
| Women's Home Missionary Society .....             | 94   |
| Women's Foreign Missionary Society .....          | 95   |
| Women's Foreign and Home Missionary Society ..... | 96   |
| Mission Study for Children and Youth .....        | 97   |
| Make Your Plans Large .....                       | 97   |
| World War II and World Service Society .....      | 98   |
| Ladies Aid Society .....                          | 100  |
| The Guild .....                                   | 101  |
| The Auxiliary .....                               | 102  |
| The Women's Association .....                     | 104  |
| The Overbrook Men's Association .....             | 106  |
| Association Changes Its Name and Activities ..... | 108  |
| Men's Association Programs .....                  | 109  |
| The Association Is Discontinued .....             | 110  |
| In Memoriam .....                                 | 121  |
| The Elders .....                                  | 125  |
| The Deacons .....                                 | 129  |
| The Trustees .....                                | 133  |
| Chronology of Building and Improvements .....     | 137  |



## I

### The Founders—Wistar Morris and Charles Wood

They were among the fortunate ones—those thirty Scotch-Irish families that had come, toward the close of the nineteenth century, to work on Wistar Morris' estate just outside Philadelphia, adjacent to Overbrook. The rolling fields, the rich soil, and the temperate climate produced good crops and provided abundant pasture. It was pleasant to work for the Quaker landowner, for with all his dignity Wistar Morris was a kindly, human person who knew each of his workers by name. They would see him, straight and tall, riding his favorite horse over the acreage—the land which is now much of the Green Hill Farms area and on which stand the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary buildings, Lankenau Hospital and Friend's Central School. Scattered about this heavily wooded estate were cottages for the men and their families.

#### SOMETHING MISSING

Yet for all these advantages something was missing. Presbyterians all, for these folk had belonged to this Denomination in their native land, they missed the opportunity to worship in their accustomed manner. What was missing? There was no Presbyterian Church anywhere near the Morris estate!

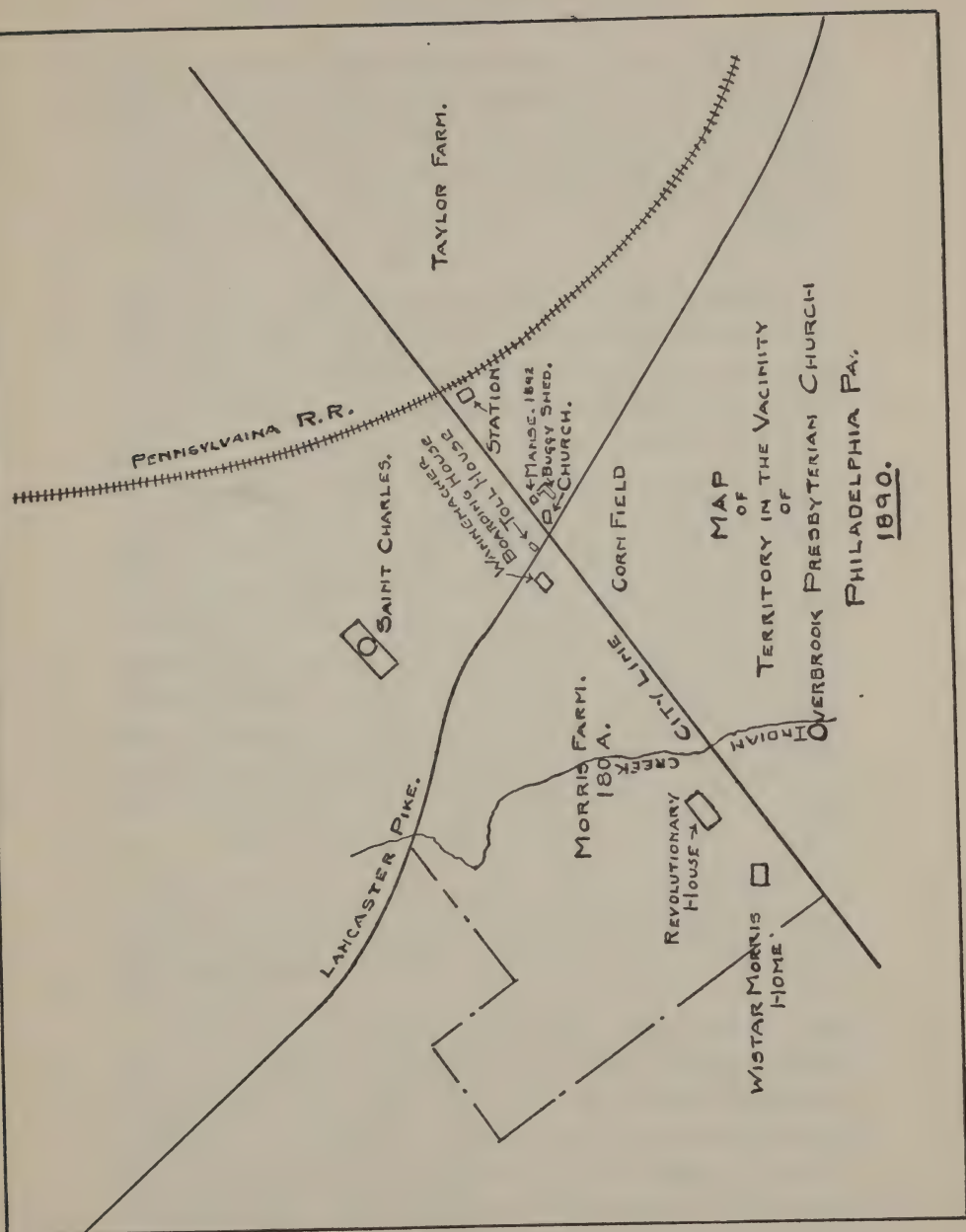
As Wistar Morris mingled with his workers, he often heard them speak of the "kirk back home in Ireland, the Presbyterian Kirk," and he pondered on their situation. He thought of how the great acreage was really a small community in itself. He thought of the neighbors beyond: the Taylor farm just up City Line and the mansion of John B. Gest a little farther out that same road. He knew that every year more people from the city spent their summers nearby in cool, shady Merion. There was talk of a summer boarding house. The community was growing; perhaps it needed a church.

Wistar Morris decided to speak to his future son-in-law, the Reverend Charles Wood, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Germantown, to see if he believed that there should be a Presbyterian Church at Overbrook. Charles Wood was interested immediately, and following his expressed desire to help, the two men decided to invite the workers on the estate to meet on Sunday evenings for worship at the Morris home. Mr. Wood agreed to make the long trip by horseback from Germantown to Overbrook each Sunday and conduct services in both places, until such time as an Overbrook Church could be organized and its own minister installed. From the first meeting the men and women enjoyed these gatherings in the friendly living room of this gracious employers' spacious house. There they sang well-loved hymns and prayed together; there they heard brief messages from the dynamic young minister.

#### THIS LIBERAL OFFER

Wistar Morris was a man of action as well as of vision. When he saw how much the Sunday evening services in his home meant to the men and women who





attended them, he talked with Charles Wood again. "Charles, we cannot delay; these people need a church of their own. Thee can help me bring this about. There are good and influential men who own nearby farms. Perhaps they, too, will assist us in forming a church."

Charles Wood agreed that the time had come to make dreams a reality. Nor was this difficult, for the two men made a list of twenty-three friends and neighbors whom they thought might be interested. Mr. and Mrs. Morris sent invitations to these neighbors to come to their home on December 11, 1888, to discuss the formation of a new Presbyterian Church. Everyone came who had been invited. The group settled around the huge fireplace and looked expectantly at their host. Mr. Morris turned to an invited friend, the Reverend William H. Miller, and asked him to open the meeting with prayer. Then, declining to take further leadership, he suggested that a chairman be appointed from among those present. The choice was John B. Gest. Then William T. Harris was elected secretary. The group was ready for the next item of business.

Slowly, Wistar Morris rose to his feet. "Gentlemen, before you take further action, may I say that should you decide to form a Presbyterian church, I would like to place an offer before you—an offer of a tract of land, about an acre I should say, on which to build a church. The land that I have in mind is at the southeast corner of Lancaster Pike and City Line, diagonally across from my farm. There you would be within the city limits, yet adjacent to the suburban area, which I am sure we all feel will soon begin to grow and expand."

With that, Wistar Morris sat down. There was a brief buzz of conversation which clearly indicated enthusiasm. Quickly they settled down to the business of appointing George W. Barr, Samuel Croft, Alexander K. Dixon, William T. Harris, Dr. Charles A. Service, John B. Gest, Wistar Morris and the Reverend Charles Wood as an advisory committee to consider the offer. Before the evening was over, this advisory committee had asked Samuel Croft and William T. Harris to investigate other possible sites for a church building, so that they might proceed with care in deciding on the location.

Nine days later, on December 20, 1888, the advisory committee met to hear this report of the committee on location: "We have called the committee to consider the generous offer of Mr. Wistar Morris of a site for a Presbyterian Church at Overbrook, consisting of an acre at the southeast corner of Lancaster and City Avenues, Philadelphia. Your committee has gone over the ground thoroughly and cannot find any situation to equal the one Mr. Morris suggests. It is convenient to Bala and Merion, and to a congregation of thirty families in whom Mr. Morris is interested; it is within walking distance of Overbrook station; it is situated on high ground, and is in every respect desirable. It is the judgment of this committee that we accept this liberal offer."

There were nods of approval on every side. Before this historic meeting was over, the unanimous decision had been made to erect a church on that site, at a cost of from \$10,000 to \$15,000. A building committee was appointed consisting of Wistar Morris, Samuel Croft, and William T. Harris. This committee's task was to receive plans and bids for a building that was to be used as a Presbyterian Church.

## A CHURCH IS BORN

Members of the committee were not long in finding an architect and a builder. The plans which seemed most suitable were those prepared by Mr. Addison Hutton, architect. The \$8,510 building contract was awarded to Mr. I. M. Green. This amount, together with the cost of items not included, such as church furnishings, organ, lighting, and other necessary equipment, totaled \$14,767, a sum just within the limits of the top figure allowed by the committee.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground in the spring of 1889 work on the proposed church structure began. On October 31, 1889, a little group gathered to lay the cornerstone. Prominent among them were Mr. and Mrs. Wistar Morris, the Reverend and Mrs. Charles Wood, Mr. George W. Barr, Mr. John B. Gest, and Mr. William T. Harris. Mr. Wood read from the Scriptures and offered a prayer that God would bless the building and those who were to use it for His work and worship. Then they placed within the stone certain secular and religious papers from Philadelphia and New York, together with a narrative of the story of how Overbrook Church was started.

Since Overbrook's new church was to be a part of the Presbyterian denomination, there remained an important procedure of the Presbytery within whose bounds the church was erected. On February 3, 1890, the Presbytery of Philadelphia North met to make official the organizing of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church. Mr. Harris attended and reported to members of the Presbytery that services were already being held in the newly completed church and that attendance had grown, in a very brief time, from 75 to some 125 or 150 persons. The Reverend Charles Wood stated that thirty persons had signified their intention of uniting



with the newly built church as soon as its organization was effected. "Our building is free from debt," he added proudly. The Presbytery then appointed a committee to proceed with the organization of the church congregation.

Ten days later, on Thursday afternoon, February 13, 1890, a serious company met in the sanctuary of Overbrook Presbyterian Church to dedicate their new church home. Those who had been invited to come from the city for the occasion were instructed to get off the train at Overbrook, "the first station on the Pennsylvania Railroad after leaving Philadelphia." Many carriages rolled up the driveway that led from Lancaster Avenue to the side door of the church. As they halted, men in long black overcoats and bowler hats assisted their wives who were dressed in sweeping fur-trimmed woolen coats over bustled dresses. Among the happiest of those present was Wistar Morris; for the birth of Overbrook Church was a dream come true for him.

Charles Wood had charge of the services. The well-known Henry Van Dyke, pastor of the Brick Presbyterian Church in New York, preached the sermon. Others who took part in the dedicatory service were the Reverend R. H. Fulton, pastor of Philadelphia's Northminster Presbyterian Church; Dr. J. M. Crowell, Secretary of the American Sunday School Union; and Dr. James R. Miller, Editorial Superintendent of the Board of Publication and Sabbath School Work. Solemnly in the presence of God and men, this company of worshippers dedicated the Overbrook Presbyterian Church.

#### FROM FARM TO CITY

Against the background of the rapidly growing city of Philadelphia with its Quaker influence, Over-

brook Presbyterian Church had its beginning. From "Penn's Green Country Town" the old colonial city was developing, at the turn of the century, into a thriving metropolis with good port facilities, expanding industry, and commerce. The gracious old homes in "Center City" had a look of settled wealth. West Philadelphia was developing rapidly. The University of Pennsylvania was in a program of expansion. The area of Thirty-second and Market Streets had become a center of commercial growth.

Fairmount Park, a beauty spot, was the finest and largest city park in the United States. Driving from Fairmount Park along City Line, one went through timbered country, passing occasional farms set back from the dirt road. Eventually one came to Lancaster Pike along which heavy Conestoga wagons had once rolled westward to Lancaster, and beyond. In 1880 Lancaster Pike had been made a macadam road. It ran from Overbrook to Paoli—some seventeen miles. For the first few years after Overbrook Church was erected, a toll gate remained on the Pike just beyond City Line. The users of the road resented its presence and were irritated at having to forfeit pennies for the privilege of using it, even though they were on foot.

Diagonally across from the church, lying between the Pike and what is now Haverford Road, was Wistar Morris' 300 acres of fertile farmland. The Morris home stood at the site of the present Friend's Central School. Near it, close to Indian Run Creek, was a gracious old dwelling known as "The Revolutionary House." Scattered here and there were the cottages of the Morris employees. From the hill where Lanke-nau Hospital now stands, one could see the gray stone buildings of the original St. Charles Borromeo Seminary—buildings that are still standing. The old Taylor

farm house could also be seen near Overbrook Station, on the north side of the tracks, where it still stands hidden behind a high hedge. Cornfields covered the area south of Lancaster Avenue between City Line and Sixty-third Street. The little stone church was truly a country church in a farm area.

For the first few years of its existence, Overbrook Presbyterian Church was the only house of worship in the vicinity. Our Lady of Lourdes Roman Catholic Church was not erected until 1894, and the Episcopal Memorial Church of St. Paul four years later. The distance to the nearest Presbyterian church was measured in miles.

By 1890, the city of Philadelphia began to change. Downtown, in "Center City," tall buildings were erected. The Market Street Elevated Line was built to 69th Street in early 1900 and that rural community grew into the present congested center. Such rapid transportation laid the foundations for the later migration from the city to the suburbs. Overbrook, like other suburban communities, developed rapidly from farm to city. An extensive home-building project known as "Overbrook Farms" was projected and promoted in the area immediately surrounding the church.

*One holy Church of God appears  
Through every age and race,  
Unwasted by the lapse of years,  
Unchanged by changing place.*





## II

### The Ministry of Charles R. Erdman

When Charles R. Erdman stepped into the pulpit of Overbrook Presbyterian Church on Easter Sunday, 1891, some of the older people in the congregation thought he looked a bit young for a preacher. But as the service progressed they could not help noticing his sincerity, dignity, and poise. By the time he had finished his sermon, the congregation felt that this young Princeton Theological Seminary student had a spiritual outlook on life which, balanced by a gentle humor, had won him to their hearts.

#### THE YOUNG PREACHER

At the close of the service, small groups of members gathered at the back of the church and on the lawn to discuss this protégé of Dr. Charles Wood, whom he had suggested as the first full-time minister.

"He's just the kind we need: A young man for our young church," someone said.

"But I understood Dr. Wood to say that Mr. Erdman has another year to complete at Seminary," someone else observed.

Another remarked: "No harm in asking if he can work out a program which will include both work and study. Most of these young preachers aren't afraid of work—they relish it, and this one looks like that kind to me!"

At a congregational meeting on April 20, 1891, Charles R. Erdman was unanimously elected minister and the following official call was prepared:

The congregation of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church being, on sufficient grounds, well satisfied of the ministerial qualifications of you, Charles R. Erdman, and having good hopes from our past experience of your labors that your ministrations in the gospel will be profitable to our spiritual interests, do earnestly call and desire you to undertake the pastoral office in said congregation; promising you in the discharge of your duty all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord. And that you may be free from worldly cares and avocations, we hereby promise and oblige ourselves to pay to you the sum of Twelve Hundred Dollars in regular monthly payments, during the time of your being and continuing the regular pastor of this church. In testimony thereof we have respectively subscribed our names, this twentieth day of April A.D. 1891.

(signed) WILLIAM T. HARRIS  
JOHN B. GEST  
SAMUEL CROFT

Attested by

Moderator of the meeting.

This certifies that I moderated the congregational meeting of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church, at which the within call was made, and that the vote was altogether unanimous, and that Messrs. W. T. Harris: John B. Gest: and Samuel Croft were authorized to sign the call on behalf of the Congregation, and that Mr. W. T. Harris was appointed a Commissioner to prosecute the call before Presbytery.

Overbrook, Pa. 4.20.1891

Moderator (signed)

CHAS. WOOD



The next day William T. Harris presented the call to the Presbytery of Philadelphia North and requested that a committee be appointed for Mr. Erdman's ordination and installation in the routine Presbytery manner. The service was held on May 8 with Dr. Charles Wood giving the charge to the pastor and the Reverend T. H. Nason the charge to the people.

The event was a doubly happy one for the congregation, since a few days previously, on May 2, the charter for the church had been approved and recorded. With its charter granted and a pastor elected, Overbrook Church faced the future with growing confidence.

#### THE FIRST FAMILY

These two occasions were saddened by the death of the congregation's friend and founder, Wistar Morris. Although he remained a Quaker all his life, and went to Friend's Meeting every First Day morning, when the evening came he would take a lighted lantern and go out into the night across his fields to attend services in the new Presbyterian Church. His tall, handsome figure had become familiar to the congregation. He had accepted readily the invitation to become a trustee for the church and in many other ways demonstrated an interest that never lagged from the inception of the church in his home until the time of his death.

Photographs of Mr. and Mrs. Wistar Morris may be seen today hanging on either side of the fireplace in the Chapel—the room dedicated to them. Their intelligent and kindly faces reflect nobility of character. Interestingly enough, soon after her husband's death Mrs. Morris became a Presbyterian, her membership in Overbrook Church coming at the age of eighty-three. Always a faithful reader of the Bible, she became convinced increasingly that the Scriptural injunction, "Ye

shall eat this bread and drink this cup," meant that she ought to join a church in which the Sacrament of Holy Communion was observed.

Dr. Charles Wood, Overbrook's other founder, was also a remarkable person. A brilliant preacher and an indefatigable worker, this son-in-law of Wistar Morris returned all of his salary into the support of the Presbyterian Church. During the time of Overbrook's founding, he was the full-time pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Germantown, a large and influential congregation. Yet Dr. Wood found time to preside at many Overbrook meetings and to arrange for the pulpit supply during that first year when there was no minister. After Charles Erdman's installation, both Dr. Wood and Mr. Morris did much by way of personal interest to assist the student-pastor to initiate his Overbrook ministry. Long after the death of his father-in-law, Dr. Wood continued to render invaluable service at Overbrook Church.

#### REMINISCENCES OF DR. ERDMAN

"What was Overbrook Presbyterian Church like during the first year or two of your ministry?" Dr. Erdman was asked recently. The informal interview which resulted gives an interesting picture of the early days in the life of the little church.

"For one thing, we had just one elder—William T. Harris—until 1895 when John B. Gest was installed. When I called an Elder's Meeting, Mr. Harris always elected me moderator. If he was away, I held a meeting and talked to myself! We had three trustees: Samuel Croft, George W. Barr, and Wistar Morris, until his death. These men carried the load of the work of the church and they did it well. There was a great deal to do that first year of ministry—a manse

was built at the cost of \$11,000 and it was a beautiful, spacious home. But I remember how astonished Mrs. Erdman and I were when we moved in just after our marriage and discovered that there wasn't a closet in the house, nor a place to store a barrel of flour.

"That first year, between my studies, sermon preparation, and pastoral work, I was very busy. The church was well filled for both the morning and evening services. Added to our congregation in summer were people from a nearby fashionable boarding house run by a Mrs. Wannemacher. There were also several families who built summer homes in Merion, so in a way we had larger congregations in summer than at other times of the year. People in those days took church seriously. Our head usher, Mr. T. Edward Ross, walked from his home in Ardmore to the church and back twice each Sunday. Others drove from Bala, Bryn Mawr, the Fifty-second Street area, and various distant communities. During church they stationed their horses and carriages in the long row of massive stone stalls which had been constructed just behind the church.

"My Sunday sermons and the mid-week service consisted largely of Bible exposition, which was the generally accepted style of preaching in those days. I remember how once, when I was in the midst of such a series on the Book of James, taking it verse-by-verse, Mr. Harris came to me and tactfully suggested that a little more variety to the style of sermons might be welcome!

"We had no choir, but there was a hearty interest in congregational singing. Two gentlemen from Bailey, Banks and Biddle were largely responsible for the music; a Mr. Van Tyne played the little reed organ which stood to the right of the pulpit, while Mr. Shane



led the congregational singing. He was called the *precentor*, the title given to the director of church singing in those days.

“The little church sanctuary was essentially the same as it is today in outline and even in some detail. Among the chief differences was the platform arrangement. The pulpit stood at the center of the platform, the organ to the right as you face the pulpit. Behind the pulpit was a stained glass window. The dimensions of the building were smaller; later, the transepts were enlarged and the front of the church was remodeled to give more space.

“The simplicity of those early days extended to my pastoral work. I made my calls on a nickel-plated old-fashioned bicycle that had a big front wheel. I shall never forget those hills in Merion and Wynnewood. After I had been at the church a year and was married and settled in the manse, I gave up my bicycle in favor of an old horse and buggy. Even then, I had to decline to go to the cemetery for grave-side services, as it took the greater part of a day to go to West Laurel Hill Cemetery and come back to the church.

“In the early days there was the uncertainty of heating with a basement furnace, a type of heating that was still somewhat in the experimental stage. I used to do much of my sermon preparation and studying huddled in an overcoat. The parsonage was so difficult to heat that first winter that Mrs. Erdman sometimes went to Germantown to stay with her relatives. In an effort to remedy the situation, Mrs. Erdman’s father had several fireplaces installed in the manse.

“Once, when the church was especially cold and people were drawing their heavy coats closely around them, I noticed one of the congregation steal out of the



back door. A little later we heard the welcome sound of the shaking of the furnace grates. In a few minutes heat began to pour from the floor registers and a sigh of relief could almost be heard sweeping through the group of worshippers. This man had driven his horse and buggy to his home, loaded it with wood, and then had come back to the church to build up the furnace fire!

“We had a special arrangement for our hard-of-hearing member, Mrs. Baugh, who was the mother of Mrs. John Marshall Gest. A large rubber speaking tube ran from the pulpit to Mrs. Baugh’s pew. I had to be sure to keep my voice directed into that tube all during the sermon!

“There was the thrill of baptizing the first baby of the congregation. This was not without incident, however. The child was the son of Mr. and Mrs. William T. Harris. I prepared my sermon especially to fit the occasion and all arrangements were made very carefully. Just at the time the baptism was to be performed, an usher came up and told me that the parents and the child were not at the church and that I had better go on with the sermon. I then proceeded with a rather lengthy explanation of the baptismal service. When I finished, there was still no child, so I announced a hymn. Finally, an usher came forward to say that unfortunately the baby was asleep and his parents did not wish to waken him. There was nothing to do but to announce that the baptism would take place the next week. This did occur and, because I had made such a point of it in my sermon, an unusually large congregation came to see the baby baptized.”

In this informal, friendly atmosphere, permeated with a sincerely genuine Christian spirit, certain

events were leading to the formation of the character of Overbrook Presbyterian Church.

#### A GIVING CHURCH

The organizing of the Session, the Board of Trustees, the Sunday School, and the Missionary Societies were all immediate necessities that took the minister's and the congregation's time, thought and energy. Practical matters, such as renovating the furnaces in both the manse and the church, and the installation of a lighting system had to be taken care of during those first two years of Charles R. Erdman's ministry. An annual budget of about \$3,500 was raised for operating expenses, including the minister's salary. Out of this sum came gifts to the Boards of Foreign and Home Missions. By 1893, the annual report to the congregation contained this sentence: "It will be noted that our contributions to the different Boards of the Church have increased fifty per cent."

Thus, Overbrook Church early cultivated a habit of giving—a habit which was to develop into many different projects far and near. From these small beginnings, the people were to have a part in building a hospital in Siam, in fostering an Italian Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, in taking a vital part in church-related activities such as ministerial relief, support and interest in church-related homes, and so on—an ever increasing list of philanthropies.

Examples of a growing interest in giving are contained in the report of the Board of Trustees for 1894 which shows that contributions were made to the Presbyterian Home for Aged Couples and Single Men at Bala, the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia, and the Boards of Foreign and Home Missions. These

gifts were often doubled and sometimes even tripled in each year as time went on.

#### AN OUTREACHING CHURCH

Overbrook Presbyterian Church, from the outset a giving church, soon became an out-reaching church, with as much interest in helping others abroad as at home. Early world-wide friends in the persons of Mr. William Harris, Dr. Claire Denman, and Dr. W. A. Briggs of Chieng Rai, Siam, were indicative of an out-reach pattern which today remains at the very center of the congregation's thought and action. The Women's Home and Foreign Missionary Societies enabled women to reach out and offer assistance to various home missions through the work of their hands, as well as by gifts of money. It would not have been surprising if the small new church, in becoming established in a sparsely settled community, had been completely taken up with its own problems, channeling its energies and interest into doing only what work was at hand. However, this was not the case. Instead, in the first four years of its existence, Overbrook Presbyterian Church increased its giving to missions four hundred per cent. A large proportion of the weekly offerings went to needs beyond the local parish. Children and young people followed the example of their elders in generous giving.

Charles R. Erdman, as pastor, reached out to the world beyond the local church. It was through his invitation that William Harris, a Seminary classmate, preached at Overbrook in 1894 and subsequently interested the congregation in missionary work in Siam. As a minister, Mr. Erdman took part in various church activities in the city of Philadelphia. One project to which he was devoted was the Railroad Young Men's



Christian Association. Every Sunday afternoon the young minister hitched up his horse and buggy and headed toward Fifty-first and Westminster Avenue, where he preached at a religious service in the Railroad Y. M. C. A. Four o'clock saw him on the platform of the new auditorium which accommodated 1,300 people. As the years went by, the meetings became increasingly popular and the large auditorium was generally filled. He continued preaching on Sunday afternoons at the Railroad Y. M. C. A. for twenty-six years.

A typical Overbrook Sunday for the young minister meant a morning church service, afternoon Sunday School, preaching at the Railroad Y. M. C. A., and then back to the church for the eight o'clock evening service. The busy schedule helped to make the years at Overbrook Church happy ones for the first minister.

#### FROM OVERBROOK TO GERMANTOWN

When a call came inviting Charles R. Erdman to be minister of the large First Presbyterian Church at Germantown, succeeding Dr. Charles Wood, he found it difficult to make a decision. He was desirous of remaining at Overbrook, for he felt certain that it would be a continuously growing parish. The area around the church was being developed by a real estate company. Then too, he liked the life that he and his family led in suburban Philadelphia. Many members of the congregation had become the Erdmans' close friends. In all, it was not easy to break these ties and accept a call elsewhere. Nevertheless, such was the decision he was led to make. At a special congregational meeting held on April 14, 1897, his resignation was accepted with deep regret.



## CHARLES R. ERDMAN'S SUCCESSOR, GEORGE REYNOLDS

For nearly a year, from 1897 to 1898, the records of Overbrook Church are silent. But on March 1, 1898, they attest that a special congregational meeting was held to consider the name of George Reynolds, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Richfield Springs, New York, to fill the pulpit vacancy. The officers of the Session and the Board of Trustees presented him to the congregation with their unanimous vote in his favor. The congregation also cast an affirmative vote. Dr. Reynolds accepted this call and he was installed as minister on May 19, 1898. Because he had been a classmate of Dr. Erdman at Princeton Theological Seminary Dr. Reynolds was no stranger at Overbrook Church. A personable and likeable young man, he did much to build up the solidarity of the parish during his four years as minister.

## A GROWING CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

These four years were years of steady growth in church membership. The number of members rose to over two hundred. The church grew strong internally, as organizations were formed to meet the interests and needs of the people. The church manual for 1900 lists the following activities: Sunday morning and evening church services, a mid-week prayer meeting, Women's Home and Foreign Mission Societies, the Ladies' Aid, a Young Ladies' Missionary Society, the Children's Band (a missionary group for children), and the Men's Association. Nine Trustees were indicated, but only three elders. Fourteen teachers comprised the Sunday School staff. At the Sunday church services, William P. Gest was musical director, and Miss Carrie H. Matchin, the organist.

The development of the land near the church into what became known as Overbrook Farms in 1893 had a definite bearing on the growth of the congregation. Wendell and Smith, real estate promoters, purchased 164 acres, comprising much of what was originally the George Estate, lying on both sides of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. On these large wooded lots, spacious and elegant homes were built. The area, called "Overbrook Farms," was described to potential residents as being from 200 to 250 feet above the level of the city with good drainage, coolness in summer, pure air, and a place which would insure health to those who lived there. Residents in Overbrook Farms were serviced by Lafferty's Store in the present McIntyre Building at Overbrook Station, Campbell's Drug Store, and a bakery. The community was conveniently accessible to the city, since sixty-four trains stopped at Overbrook Station, running at half-hour intervals all day and late into the night. A quarterly ticket of 180 trips cost \$11.75 and a ten-ride ticket, one dollar.

As part of this development many beautiful drives were laid out. Roads were improved. The new houses were wired for electricity, "the great refinement of modern life," and they had "open plumbing" in kitchen and bath. A central steam-heat plant was available to home owners. These beautiful homes attracted people of refinement and culture, large numbers of whom found their way to Overbrook Presbyterian Church. They drove their carriages along shaded streets to the little church on the corner of Lancaster Pike and City Line, taking care to arrive in plenty of time to secure a seat, for the church was always well filled.

## RESIGNATION OF GEORGE REYNOLDS

This, then, was the parish which George Reynolds, second pastor of Overbrook Church, served. He did his best to keep up with his growing congregation, but problems at home made it difficult. Once robust and athletic, Mrs. Reynolds had sustained a physical injury which left her an invalid. Between his many church duties, the problems of caring for a sick wife, attempting to keep the manse in order and preparing meals, Mr. Reynolds found life very strenuous. At a special meeting of the congregation held on March 19, 1902, his resignation was read, after which he expressed his personal appreciation for the "kindness and affection of the people shown in times of special trial." Once again, the pulpit of Overbrook Church was vacant.





### III

#### The Ministry of Guido Bossard

Dr. Guido Bossard, Overbrook's third minister, came from a pastorate in the Presbyterian Church of LaCrosse, Wisconsin. He was a mature, scholarly man. It was not easy for him to decide to leave a situation where he had ample time for study and reading for what he knew would be a strenuous pastorate.

#### THE CALL

Overbrook Church, a busy church in a growing community, had been without a minister for a year. Plans were being considered for a new Sunday School building and for the enlargement of the sanctuary. Nevertheless, the situation intrigued Dr. Bossard sufficiently to accept the call, and he was installed as pastor of the church on June 20, 1903.

The busy summer was a foretaste of the year ahead and Dr. Bossard used those warm, humid months to call on members of his church. He used them too, for studying and thinking about the place that the church should have in the midst of the expanding neighborhood. When he wanted to be by himself to think, he would slip into the church, unlock the organ, and settle himself for half an hour or so of Bach preludes or favorite hymns, for Overbrook's third minister was a musician as well as a scholar and preacher.

#### MUSIC AT OVERBROOK

Because of Dr. Bossard's musical talent and interests, it is appropriate to consider the development of the musical tradition at Overbrook Presbyterian

Church in this chapter. This musical tradition had its beginning back in 1893 when the first committee on music was named. It was composed of Mr. F. A. Harris, and Mr. William T. Harris, who emphasized the importance of music to the church. In December, 1893, a few months after their appointment, a precentor to conduct the congregational singing was engaged for the morning church service and sabbath school.

The organ which Dr. Bossard enjoyed playing had been installed in the church in 1899 at a cost of \$2,255. Subscribed and entirely paid for by members of the church, this new organ lent dignity to the services of worship. It was formally dedicated at an organ recital on May 1, 1899.

Vocal music in those early days was rendered by a chorus choir. In 1902 the control of the music was placed in the hands of the Board of Trustees who appointed a music committee and authorized it to spend a thousand dollars a year on music, including the organist's salary. However, this amount was increased to \$1,400 in a short time because the two volunteer singers in the quartet resigned and were replaced by professionals. Thus, four professional vocalists provided the music for several years, except for occasional periods when a chorus choir was organized to augment this quartet.

It was during Dr. Bossard's ministry that church music at Overbrook received an impetus that set a pattern for the future. Additional funds were appropriated for music and careful attention was given to supervising the quartet, choir, and organist. In 1912 a generous gift made it possible to enlarge the organ and make still further improvements in music.

Those early years set high standards for the music of Overbrook Church. The choir came to include such distinguished soloists as Helen Buchanan, Nelson Eddy, Wilbur Evans, Frances Greer and Leonard Treach. This high musical standard has continued.

Three members of the present quartet and the director of music have been with us from twelve to twenty years: Fritz Krueger, Harry Martyn, Virginia Kendrick and Margaret Krueger.

#### BUILDING PROGRAM

From the beginning of the second year of Dr. Bossard's ministry, time for music became more and more difficult to find, for plans to remodel the church and build an addition to it for the Sunday School finally became a reality. The plans called for building a tower at the back of the church, along City Line, and extending the platform area to allow more room for a choir. This enlarged the sanctuary and allowed for several more rows of pews. The old golden-oak pews were to be replaced later by cushioned pews of darker color. The new arrangement of the platform meant that the choir would be seated behind the minister and in front of the organ.

The Sunday School had become so large that two sessions were necessary. A new building was needed to accommodate this ever-increasing membership. It was erected next to the church along Lancaster Avenue.

When the Sunday School building was completed, its main feature was a large assembly room with a generous stage at the East end. A smaller platform from which the superintendent conducted the "opening exercises" stood at the center of the wall on the Lancaster Avenue side. Opposite this, along the north

wall, provision was made for classrooms which could be curtained off for privacy. A budget of \$33,000 was set up to take care of the entire building project.

Dr. Bossard, the Elders, Trustees and a building committee canvassed the congregation, raising \$34,117. This sum, added to the income of a legacy that had been left to the church by Wistar Morris, was not only sufficient for remodeling the church and for erecting the new Sunday School building, but it also took care of furnishings for the new building and left a residue with which to buy a much needed heating plant for the manse. Mrs. Catherine D. Wentz presented the church with a memorial window which was installed in the west wall of the church, along City Line. The new building and the remodeling of the church by the addition of the tower, were completed in 1905.

An expanded program went into immediate effect for the Sunday School. Attendance rose to 170 scholars and twenty-eight teachers and officers. A young people's association was formed; the Women's Bible Class and the Men's Bible Class flourished.

The enlarged church sanctuary meant that there was no longer the embarrassment of turning people away on Sunday mornings because there were not enough pews.

Other changes were made as a result of the inspiration of a larger and finer place for worship: individual cups were used instead of the common cup for the Communion Service, and the Elders adopted formal dress for Communion Sundays. A Vesper service, often largely musical, was substituted for the evening service about this time.

To help new members feel more at home and to assimilate them into the work of the church, a com-



mittee known as the Pastor's Visiting Committee was formed. By 1908, just five years after Dr. Bossard had become pastor of Overbrook Church, 186 new members had been added to the rolls.

#### TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Sunday, May 8, 1910, marked the beginning of a week-long observance of the Twentieth Anniversary of Overbrook Church. Dr. Erdman was called back to preach the sermon. On Wednesday evening, May 20, following the congregational meeting at which Dr. Charles Wood was guest speaker, members of the church held a reception for Dr. and Mrs. Bossard. For this happy and festive occasion, the Sunday School room was decorated with ferns, palms and flowers, providing a setting for the women in their long, full-skirted frocks and large hats—flowered and feathered. The men wore Prince Alberts and striped trousers. Children, dressed “for best,” wore short pants or ruffled and sashed dresses, long stockings and high-buttoned shoes. The reception reflected the stability and well-being of the congregation. Overbrook Presbyterian Church had come of age.

The church entered its third decade with splendid facilities and a flourishing congregation of nearly 350 members. Special attention was being paid to parish work. By 1910 the church budget—including both local expenses and gifts to benevolences—rose to \$12,380. This was an era of new missionary projects, such as helping to build a new Italian Church, assisting the missions in center city, and raising money to help pay for a Gospel Hall for the Chieng Rai Mission. There was need for spending money at home too, for by 1912 the Sunday School had grown so large that the rooms

had to be remodeled to gain space for the 250 scholars that crowded into the building every Sunday.

#### TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

The church celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary with two special services on Sunday, December 8, 1915, to mark the beginning of a week of celebration. Dr. Erdman and others spoke at "An Evening of History and Reminiscence" on Thursday, December 9th. These men who had watched the church grow, noted how this growth had been both physical and spiritual: there were new Sunday School rooms and an enlarged church edifice; church membership over the twenty-five year period had increased from the original 33 charter members to 438. A total of \$143,000 had been given to missionary and charitable work during those years—a sum which exceeded the \$130,000 that the church had spent for its own support and building enterprises. The Sunday School enrollment of 320, together with the activities of the various adult organizations, were taken as outer signs of inner spiritual growth.

#### DURING WORLD WAR I

The church felt the impact of the First World War in several ways. For one thing, there was a sharp increase in church attendance; and once again the Session had to cope with the problem of an over-crowded sanctuary on Sunday mornings. Specific war activities included sending a New Testament to every Overbrook Church member in the armed forces. The women of the church were active in a Women's Liberty Loan Committee, which they had formed, and regular day-long meetings were held at the church for the purpose of making bandages and surgical dressings. Dr. Bos-sard urged the Men's Bible Class and the Men's Asso-

ciation to keep up their attendance and work so that when the boys came home, they would find a welcome in a thriving, active church.

#### FROM OVERBROOK TO DUBUQUE

This even flow of days was interrupted in the Spring of 1920, when Dr. Bossard announced that he had decided after much deliberation to accept the Professorship of New Testament Literature and Interpretation at the Divinity School of the University of Dubuque. The Session accepted his resignation reluctantly, for it terminated a long and successful ministry. Dr. Bossard then returned to the educational profession, which had always intrigued him.

In spite of the general hope that a new pastor could be located for the growing congregation without great delay, the weeks lengthened into summer and no pastor had been secured. Meanwhile the church was fortunate in obtaining a supply minister, Dr. Charles Wadsworth, a retired minister living in Overbrook. He agreed to serve until a regular pastor could be found. Despite ill health, Dr. Wadsworth maintained a heavy schedule of work and worship at Overbrook Church from 1920 until 1922.





## IV

### The Ministry of George Emerson Barnes

When George Emerson Barnes accepted the call to Overbrook Presbyterian Church in 1922, he set himself to a task that was to occupy the remaining years of his life. He was well qualified for the challenge.

#### THE CALL AND THE MAN

Dr. Barnes was a commanding figure: tall, distinguished in appearance, forty years old, and possessing a record of three successful pastorates in Michigan. His keen intellect was balanced by a warm personality that drew people to him in a way which enabled him to perform a ministry of helpfulness to others.

Dr. Barnes combined the democracy of America with the culture of Europe. A Rhodes Scholar, he was reared in the West and educated in this country and abroad. He possessed great administrative ability, tremendous energy and rare diplomatic skill. His gracious and friendly manner put people at their ease. He possessed the pleasant faculty of bringing the best out of people and a happy issue out of a difficult situation.

#### CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Building up the membership at Overbrook Church was the first problem which the new minister faced. Dr. Barnes asked his elders to assist him in examining the membership rolls. There were nearly a thousand names on the roll, but as the elders went over this list some questions were raised: Where were certain indi-

viduals now? Some had moved away. Many had joined other churches. Others had not been seen in the church for a long time. Dr. Barnes began making calls in an attempt to discover the real facts about these church families. It took weeks to secure all of the information, and when the task was completed, there were 350 active members and 250 inactives on the roll.

Having cleared the membership roll, as the next step in strengthening the church, the Minister presented the Session with a plan for parish work. He proposed to divide the congregation into various districts with certain church members in each who would be responsible for the welfare and spiritual interest of the other members in their area. By making calls and urging attendance at worship, the spiritual life of the church would be strengthened and prospective members would be found. In approving the plan, the Session also projected a series of Tuesday evening meetings which were to be held in the homes of church members during Lent. The success of this parish plan and the "house meetings", as the Lenten gatherings in homes were called, indicated that the program answered a need in the lives of the people.

#### REBUILDING PROGRAM

After two years, the problem of membership reversed itself: no longer was it a case of building up a church with a large inactive membership, but rather it became a question of what to do with all the people who were coming to church and Sunday school!

At length it became apparent that something would have to be done about the rapidly growing church. The use of the sun porch of the manse and the sanctuary for extra classes did not solve the problem of congestion. Every inch of space had been

pressed into service and there simply was no more room. The enrollment of the church school was nearing 400. The week of dedication of the new church house which began on Sunday, May 23, 1926, was the climax of four years of hard work for Overbrook Church. A rightful pride, born of knowledge of all that had gone into the growth and development of the program of their church, possessed the members of Overbrook on the day on which they dedicated their new Church House.

It was pressed into immediate service. The Trustees and Session drew up a day-by-day schedule for its use. Community organizations were encouraged to hold educational meetings in the beautiful new auditorium and take advantage of the recreational facilities, provided that no admission fee was charged and that the purpose of the meeting was not to raise money. Community relations were widened by this "open door" policy and new friends were made for the Church.

Another evidence of friendly community relations was an invitation to neighboring pastors to preach at the Sunday evening services for one month during the winter. In the summer, Overbrook Church joined services with The Memorial Church of St. Paul (Episcopal)—a practice that continued for ten years to the satisfaction of both churches.

#### IMPACT OF THE DEPRESSION

Just as these activities of the church were at their height, the great depression struck, beginning in December, 1929. Unhappily, the new church house was not quite paid for. Overbrook people did what they could to raise the money to pay off the debt. They inaugurated a series of fellowship dinners to help.

Another source of income was found in the Annual Lawn Fete, held each June by the Women's Foreign and Home Missionary Society. In 1930, for example, the sum of seven hundred dollars was realized at the fete held at Mrs. Delaplaine's home in Merion.

Financial corners were cut by having less help on the church staff, and the minister took a voluntary reduction in salary. The church moved ahead in spite of difficulties. The Sunday School enrollment reached five hundred. The church was crowded on Sunday. Many gave of their time and their talents to make up for the smaller amounts they had to give to the church. Sewing for missionary projects increased as did the number of boxes which were sent from Overbrook to Siam, and to the Bicksler's project in Wyoming.

During one of the "poor years" of the depression, the church gave more than seven hundred dollars to the Presbyterian Home for Widows and Single Women in Philadelphia, over twelve hundred dollars to the Presbyterian Hospital, eight hundred dollars to the Bala Home, and nearly four thousand dollars to the Second Italian Presbyterian Church. One can read between the lines of the various organizations' records and sense a great determination to continue work "as usual" so that financial commitments might be met and benevolences maintained during the depression years.

The result of this struggle was not only the raising of money but the close uniting of the people of the congregation in this single unflinching purpose of keeping the work of the Christian Church alive and vital at a time when it was badly needed. At the Annual Meeting of the Congregation on February 14, 1935, Mr. Fred A. Rakestraw, President of the Board of Trustees, reported that the Church Indebtedness Fund



which had amounted to \$53,152, had been entirely subscribed.

#### DELEGATE AND MODERATOR

In May, 1934, the Presbytery of Philadelphia elected Dr. Barnes a commissioner to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. His duties in this capacity placed him in a position of national leadership. It was not surprising when, in 1936, he was made a delegate to represent the denomination at both the Faith and Order and the Life and Work Assemblies of the World Council of Churches, which met in Oxford, England and in Edinburgh, Scotland. That same year his fellow ministers elected him Moderator of the Philadelphia Presbytery—a position which he held for two terms.

#### REVISION OF BENEVOLENCE PROGRAM

For some time Dr. Barnes felt that the benevolences of the church could be integrated into a budget which would work toward certain specific goals. The plan, adopted in 1936, followed along these lines: 1. The adoption of a goal for benevolences for the entire year with a printed list of all the projects for giving distributed to the congregation. 2. The solicitation of contributions to these causes. 3. The right of any individual to designate the way in which his contribution was to be divided among the various specific projects. 4. The abolition of monthly project offerings and the adoption of a general benevolence annual offering envelope in which contributions to the benevolence budget as a whole could be made on any Sunday.

The benevolence budget included all causes to which Overbrook people wished to contribute. These

were grouped under six general headings: National Missions, Foreign Missions, Christian Education, Board of Pensions, Philadelphia Presbyterian Institutions and Philadelphia Cooperative Christian Enterprises. The budget was projected on a basis of \$5,850—an increase of more than \$500 over the previous year of 1936.

In line with this interest in benevolences, a series of four mission study evenings was arranged for the entire church. The mission study textbooks for the year were the basis of these evening meetings and in some instances, special speakers were engaged. This all-church mission-study series was heartily approved by the congregation, and it continued for several years.

#### PLANS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

On April 22, 1936, the Session projected a four-year plan that was to culminate in the celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of Overbrook Church in 1940. It was an ambitious plan but a realistic one: definite goals of church membership were set: increase in the Sunday School enrollment, organizational activities and physical alterations to the church were part of this four-year program. An improved system of church lighting, new hymnals, a baptismal font, a new organ—all these were among the stated objectives. This four-year plan was of deep concern to Dr. Barnes during much of the second half of his pastorate.

Two years before the Fiftieth Anniversary, the church membership reached 971. This was a matter of great satisfaction and rejoicing.

The vitality and health of Overbrook Church during those busy years was reflected in all of its activi-

ties. Each Sunday evening about 100 young people met for fellowship and study. Congregations on Sunday and attendance at mid-week service was high. Easter Sunday, 1936, saw the largest attendance ever recorded in the history of the church to that date, with an over-flow group seated in the church house auditorium. The Fellowship Dinners were popular, the annual Daily Vacation Bible School was well attended, and the church house was in almost constant use—day and night. There was a decided outreach too, as is evidenced by a statement Dr. Barnes made to his Session in June, 1938: "Our church has attained a new position of prominence and leadership in the denomination as a whole through the service which was rendered as host to the 150th General Assembly."

#### FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY MEMORIALS

Far from being confined to a celebration that lasted only the week of May 5, 1940, the Fiftieth Anniversary of Overbrook Church really began when, one by one, the several goals of the Four Year plan were achieved. The first of these was the dedication of the new chancel with its various memorials on November 19, 1939. Dr. Charles R. Erdman assisted in the service of dedication. The chancel in which he stood for those dedicatory services bore no resemblance to the original simple platform with its center pulpit and choir loft at the rear. Dr. Erdman read a list of the memorials. It contained many names of those who had helped to found and build Overbrook Church.

The new church is a carefully planned work of art, arranged to focus one's attention on the worship of God. At the center is a communion table made of imported Italian marble, enhanced with bands of colored marble. It stands against a richly carved wood



reredos of Gothic style. At its center hangs a hand-woven blue dossal or cloth. On either side are richly colored shields to represent the countries from which the reformed faith came to the United States. Reading from left to right these are: Ireland, England and Wales, Scotland, France, Switzerland, Holland and, continuing upon the doors behind the choir: Italy, Bohemia and Moravia, Hungary and Germany. The hand-carved wood pulpit and lecturn, choir seats and other appointments of the chancel, are done in Appalachian oak by Erik Jansson, one of Philadelphia's finest wood craftsmen. On the communion table are a bronze cross and an open Bible. Each of the chancel appointments is a memorial gift—each represents someone who had been a well-loved member of the church—whose memory is now perpetuated by friends and family. Plaques on each gift bear the names both of the donors and those whom they wished remembered.

With the dedicatory recital of the Geist Memorial Organ on January 17, 1940, another important goal was achieved. Given in the memory of Clarence H. Geist by his wife, Florence H. Geist, the splendid Möller organ is a fitting memorial to a man who had been a Trustee from 1912 to 1928 and chairman of the building committee when the church house had been erected. The three-manual organ is one of the finest that the Möller Company has ever built. When the nationally-known organist, Virgil Fox, played the dedicatory recital, and the music of J. S. Bach and Cesar Franck filled the church, the audience was able to appreciate fully the magnificence of the instrument.

The report to Presbytery on April 1, 1940, stated that the membership of Overbrook Presbyterian Church was now 1082—well beyond the goal of a thousand set by the Four Year Plan. The only goal



not achieved was the one for the Sunday School. It was impractical to bring the enrollment to more than 450, which was the maximum that the church house could accommodate. The women's work, coordinated through the creation of the Guild, had been operating successfully for a year and a half before the Fiftieth Anniversary. The Youth Budget and the large attendance at programs of work and worship of the Youth Association evidenced achievement of these goals for youth work. Happily also, the remaining church indebtedness of \$6,400 was completely liquidated when it was time to celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary.

And so, there was much to be thankful for and to rejoice over during that week-long celebration in 1940! Dr. Erdman preached on Sunday, May 5. On Wednesday, May 8, members met in the church house for the anniversary fellowship dinner and home-coming celebration. The program was chiefly historical, recalling times past in the life of the church. There was an exhibition of pictures and historical material, gathered by a special committee that had searched for interesting items. On Friday, a beautiful musical program was presented by the choir and organist. The climax of the week of celebration came on Sunday, May 12 with a service of worship and a sermon by Dr. Sam Higginbottom, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

## OVERBROOK IN WORLD WAR II

As was true in all churches, the second World War left its mark upon Overbrook. Dr. Barnes corresponded with each church member who was in the armed services. Through their pastor's letters, the men felt the concern and deep interest of their church. The pastor soon became involved personally, in a way

that affected his church, for on December 15, 1940, at a special meeting of the Session, a letter was read which bore the signatures of the Moderator and Stated Clerk of the General Assembly. The writers explained that the General Council of the Presbyterian Church had placed in operation a proposal of the last General Assembly to coordinate the numerous appeals to Presbyterian Churches to help the victims of war. As a result, the General Council was asking Dr. Barnes to organize the work of this committee, and his church to release the time for him to carry on this project.

Dr. Barnes was chairman and executive director of the Presbyterian United World Emergency Fund for two years. At the end of this time, in 1942, the 154th General Assembly adopted a resolution which thanked both Dr. Barnes and the Overbrook Presbyterian Church for their contribution to this significant work of the Church.

All this time, the women of Overbrook were contributing to war efforts. They cooperated with the Red Cross in making bandages and carrying out various projects; they assisted in local hospitals where the shortage of nurses was a serious problem. The men of the church, thinking of their sons in the service, gave of their time to keep the home fires burning. The war years were active ones for the Men's Club; between two hundred and three hundred men attended monthly meetings. Corresponding with Overbrook boys who were in the armed forces was one of the continuing projects of the club.

Even with the burden of the war and the loss of some of its outstanding leaders, Overbrook Church moved ahead steadily. In 1941 James Renwick Hogg, an Elder for eighteen years, passed away at the age of 85. He was one of the few laymen to be elected

Moderator of the Presbytery of Philadelphia. Though educated as a lawyer Mr. Hogg had become one of Philadelphia's outstanding business men and industrial leaders. As a deeply consecrated Christian, his life enriched all those who came to know him.

Two years later, in 1943, Overbrook people sustained another loss in Elder George W. Magee. For forty-seven years Mr. Magee had been a Presbyterian Elder and of this period, forty-four years were at Overbrook Presbyterian Church which he joined in 1899. Treasurer of the Session, vitally interested in the Sunday School, he served his church in wide areas: as a friend of Foreign Missions, the Y. M. C. A., Presbyterian Hospital, and many others. He was indeed a beloved citizen of the world, and a constant advocate of ecumenical Christianity.

The church membership, in 1943, reached 1,137; the Sunday School enrollment was well over four hundred; the finances were in sound condition. The church had other reasons to be proud for, in June, 1943, it was cited by the Presbytery of Philadelphia for having exceeded its quota for the War Time Commission.

#### BOARD OF DEACONS

Still another milestone was the creation of a Board of Deacons at a special congregational meeting held on April 30, 1944. The fourteen men proposed were unanimously elected. They assumed their work as guardians of the charity and welfare of the church members with true devotion—a devotion that has continued through the years.

#### ASSISTANTS TO DR. BARNES

There were three assistants to Dr. Barnes who must be mentioned in a history of the church.



The Reverend Pierson Harris, a resident of Overbrook and a graduate of Haverford College and Union Theological Seminary, was assistant to Dr. Barnes from March 15, 1926 to August 15, 1928. Mr. Harris left to assume his own pastorate.

The Reverend William F. Schuler, who had grown up in Overbrook and who had been a member of the church, decided to enter the ministry. He studied at Temple University and at Princeton Theological Seminary. He served as assistant to Dr. Barnes from November 12, 1937 to November 26, 1939. Mr. Schuler left to become Minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Zanesville, Ohio.

When World War II came to a close, the young people's organizations increased in membership and enjoyed new vigor. In 1945, to carry on the youth and educational program, Robert G. Foulkes, a student at Temple University, was appointed assistant to the minister.

Mr. Foulkes carried on effectively from September 19, 1945 to September 30, 1948 when he entered Princeton Theological Seminary to complete his preparation for the ministry.

#### DR. BARNES' LAST YEARS

About this time Dr. Barnes organized the Greater Philadelphia Council of Churches and was made its first president. He also was a member of the General Council of the Presbyterian Church. Both of these duties took much time and energy.

The summer of 1948 saw Dr. Barnes in Amsterdam, Holland, as a delegate to the World Council of Churches Meetings. It was a stimulating experience and a fruitful one for him. On his return to America he was in great demand as a speaker by those who



wanted to hear about the conference. One of these reports on the Amsterdam Assembly came on November 9 at a meeting of the Philadelphia Presbytery. His absorbing interest in ecumenicity had made him an excellent delegate and an enthusiastic reporter. It was a stimulating afternoon and the speaker was weary when it was over. It had been a busy autumn, both with church duties and outside activities. His weariness became insufferable and on November 11 he was taken to the Presbyterian Hospital for a complete rest and thorough examinations. His heart, as well as his body was tired.

After seven weeks Dr. Barnes was sufficiently improved to come home. He wrote a cheerful and hopeful Christmas message to the congregation, assuring his people that he would be among them soon. But on the morning of December 29, 1948 he quietly slipped away as his great heart stopped beating. The friends of George Emerson Barnes were stunned with grief, unable to believe that he would be with them no more. That he was a man of stature, people had often said, referring not only to his physical size, but also to his greatness of spirit. The list of his accomplishments is long: scholar, a leader of the church on every level—locally, nationally and internationally. But most of all, he was a servant of God and a friend to man. Many were the tributes that appeared at home and abroad in newspapers and scholarly journals, but the tribute of his parishioners—the testimonies of friendship and encouragement that came from the men and women who had gone to war, the stories related by members who had been ill, bereaved, or in trouble all were—"He was my friend. He showed me the Christian life in joy and in sorrow." These were the real tributes to the man, who for more than twenty-six years had been Pastor of Overbrook Presbyterian Church.



## V

### The Ministry of Alvin Duane Smith

In the autumn of 1948, Alvin Duane Smith, pastor of the Old Manokin Presbyterian Church on the historic Eastern Shore of Maryland, was selected by Dr. Barnes and the Session to become assistant minister. A native of West Virginia, he was a graduate of Washington and Jefferson College and of Princeton Theological Seminary, from which institution he obtained both the bachelor and master of theology degrees. Subsequently he received the doctorate of sacred theology from Temple University.

This young minister was of the war generation. Immediately following his ordination, he had been a chaplain in the United States Navy. In addition to the Maryland Church, he had also served as minister of the Waverly Park Presbyterian Church in Newark, New Jersey. He assumed his duties at Overbrook Church on October 1, 1948.

#### THE CRISIS AND THE CALL

The new assistant minister had scarcely begun his association with Dr. Barnes when the latter suffered a heart attack which required weeks of enforced inactivity at Philadelphia's Presbyterian Hospital. He passed away on December 29 shortly after he had returned home.

Being thus required to carry on single handed in a strange and difficult situation, Alvin Duane Smith met the crisis so well, both in pulpit and in parish,

and so endeared himself to all by his devotion and dedication, that after the death of Dr. Barnes, the pulpit committee and the congregation of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church decided that it would be both unnecessary and undesirable to look elsewhere for a successor. Thus, the young assistant minister soon found himself minister. The pulpit nominating committee announced his candidacy on Easter Sunday, 1949; he was elected two weeks later.

The Service of Installation was held on Tuesday evening, June 7, 1949. Participants included Lewis M. Stevens, Esq., Moderator; Dr. G. Malcom Van Dyke, Pastor of the Lansdowne Presbyterian Church; Dr. John T. Peters, Minister of the Westside Presbyterian Church in Germantown; Dr. William Wefer, Executive Secretary of the Presbytery of Philadelphia; Dr. Alexander MacColl, Pastor Emeritus of the Second Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia; and Dr. Rex Stowers Clements, Minister of the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church, who preached the installation sermon.

#### YEARS OF CONTINUED PROGRESS

The first decade of the ministry of Dr. Smith were years of maturity in the life of Overbrook Church. The membership continued to grow, though not as rapidly as in earlier eras when the population tide was moving in the direction of Overbrook rather than away from Overbrook as was the case during the years now in question. Yet in the first ten years, nearly 900 new members were received into the church fellowship, and the membership increased to nearly 1600. During the same period, current annual receipts for church operation and annual benevolences more than doubled, the former rising from \$30,905 to \$64,299, and the latter from \$18,300 to \$40,453. Impressive totals



for the first nine years are \$509,482 for current receipts for church operation, \$237,651 for benevolences, and an additional sum of \$137,556 for special funds, making a grand total of almost one million dollars. During this time Overbrook Church met its quotas for three extra drives, including the denomination Building Fund (1952) over \$11,000, Presbyterian Hospital Modernization (1955) at which time our members contributed over \$60,000, and the Presbytery Growth and Rehabilitation Fund (1957-8) over \$54,000.

#### PASTORAL STATISTICS AND PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

During the first decade of his ministry at the Overbrook Presbyterian Church, Dr. Smith baptized over 300 children and adults, married nearly 200 couples and conducted over 250 funerals. He delivered almost a thousand sermons and addresses, of which some were printed and many others deserved such preservation in permanent form.

A beautiful Memorial stained glass window honoring 226 service men and women from Overbrook Church who served in the armed forces in World War II, was dedicated in 1949; its effective lighting, making it visible at night to the busy traffic on the cross roads at City Line and Lancaster Avenue, was completed four years later. The George Emerson Barnes Memorial Window was installed in 1956. New altar appointments, including cross, Bible, vases, and candlesticks, were dedicated in 1951. The illumination of the interior of the church was improved two years later by beautiful bronze drop lights. In 1955, the entire church and church school buildings were repainted. In that same year, the adjoining residence, previously purchased by the church, was razed to provide a much needed parking lot and recreation space

for outdoor games. Its completion has provided Overbrook Church with one of the finest church parking lots in the city.

#### ASSISTANT MINISTERS

The following three assistant ministers served the Overbrook Presbyterian Church during the first decade of Dr. Smith's ministry:

The Reverend Harold M. Neufeld came to Overbrook on September 1, 1951 from Princeton Seminary. He left on December 12, 1953 to assume the pastorate of the neighboring Presbyterian Church in Gladwynne.

The Reverend Robert L. Jansen came to Overbrook in September of 1954, also from Princeton Seminary. He left on May 16, 1957 to assume the assistant pastorate of the Mountain View Presbyterian Church of Tucson, Arizona.

The Reverend Guy M. Kinman, Jr. came to Overbrook September 10, 1957 after service as a chaplain in the United States Air Force.

Overbrook Presbyterian Church also presented several candidates for the ministry during this period. The Reverend Robert Foulkes, formerly assistant to the minister at Overbrook and subsequently chaplain at the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia, was ordained in 1951. The Reverend Dale Bussis, who had been associated with Dr. Smith in his religious work in the United States Navy and later with him as secretary at Overbrook Church, was ordained in 1955. Mr. Donald Fehr, a member and son of a member of the Overbrook Church, was, in 1957, taken under the care of the Session as a candidate for the ministry.

Miss Betsy Ulrich, a leader in Overbrook Presbyterian Church youth organizations, completed prepara-

tion for missionary service in 1957. She had been professionally trained in hospital and university for nursing and the education of nurses.

#### REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

To troubled areas of Europe, as well as Asia, Overbrook has extended a long and helping arm. The Overbrook Refugee Resettlement Committee, organized in 1956 after the Communist suppression of life and liberty in East Germany and Hungary, sponsored four European refugees and assisted three others to find a new and better life in America.

#### INTERNAL AFFAIRS IN RETROSPECT

A Coordinating Committee, composed of two elders, two deacons and two trustees, was organized in 1950 to develop still further the program of the church in cooperation among its three governing boards. The Coordinating Committee has been very successful in achieving many improvements without friction or duplication of effort.

The Women's Association, to be described in Chapter VIII, was organized in 1952. Rotation of membership on all three boards and a church officer training program were begun in 1957.

A community program was organized in 1955 to bind more closely together congregation members into neighborhood groups of families living in the same vicinity. Church neighbors have met together in the homes of their community leaders. This program was co-ordinated by Miss Jean Louise Smith, who served as parish visitor from September, 1955 to June, 1958, at which time she was succeeded by Mrs. Gloria T. Rodgers.



Boy Scouts were so successful under good leadership among the youth of Overbrook that Cub Scouts also were organized. A Junior Choir and a Festival Chorus were formed, gowned and trained by able and devoted members of our congregation and our Director of Music. These young groups, like the older and more experienced choruses, have sung in worship services and other church affairs.

Attendance at church service became so large that the experimental Sunday morning service held at 9:30 in addition to the 11 o'clock service became, in 1949, a regular and permanent feature except during the summer months when a single service has been held, formerly at 11 o'clock, but more recently at 10 o'clock, Daylight Saving Time. In 1955, a third Easter morning service was added at 8 o'clock. A second Candlelight Communion Service during Holy Week became a regular feature of the church program in 1956. Additional Christmas season services also were scheduled regularly.

#### THE PASSING OF A PATRIARCH

On June 7, 1957, Fred Geiger passed away at the age of 87. Mr. Geiger had been a Trustee of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church since 1931, and President of the Board for many years. In 1953 he was elected President Emeritus of the Board of Trustees and the following year was ordained an Elder. A devoted and beloved Christian he gave unstintingly of his time and efforts to the welfare of his church and the advancement of God's Kingdom on Earth.

#### OVERBROOK IN PROSPECT

Overbrook Presbyterian Church has passed the half century mark. Its golden anniversary is now history, and all history must be regarded as prologue to a still greater future.



Overbrook has grown from the small, rural church that Dr. Erdman knew and served to the large urban church to which came Dr. Smith. The earlier migration of a century ago from the country to the city was reversed a generation ago by the mass exodus of people with comfortable incomes from the city to the suburbs. While city churches decrease in membership suburbia increases in population and extends its outreach to more remote regions, building therein new homes, new schools, new churches and new shopping centers.

Overbrook Presbyterian Church now stands at the crossroads both geographically and historically, both materially and spiritually. What the future holds in store is beyond human prediction, but it is within the Providence of God to Whose vision there are no horizons. The present generation, however, must make plans and provisions for the future, if the Witness for God of Overbrook Presbyterian Church in the years to come is to be strong and clear as it has been in the past.

*Her priests are all God's faithful sons,  
To serve the world raised up;  
The pure in heart her baptized ones,  
Love her communion-cup.*

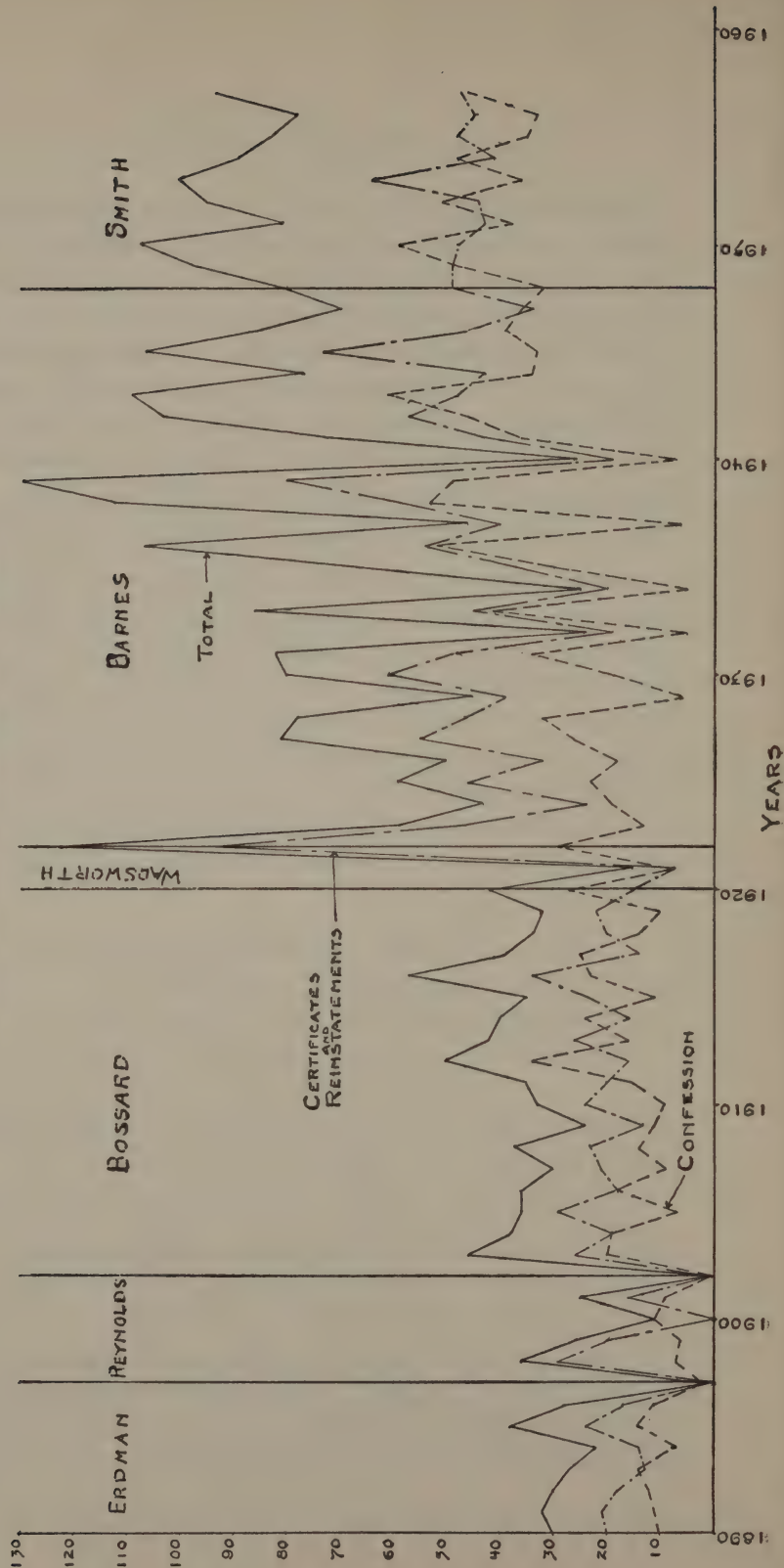
---

*Editor's Note*—As this book goes to press we regret to add the following announcement:

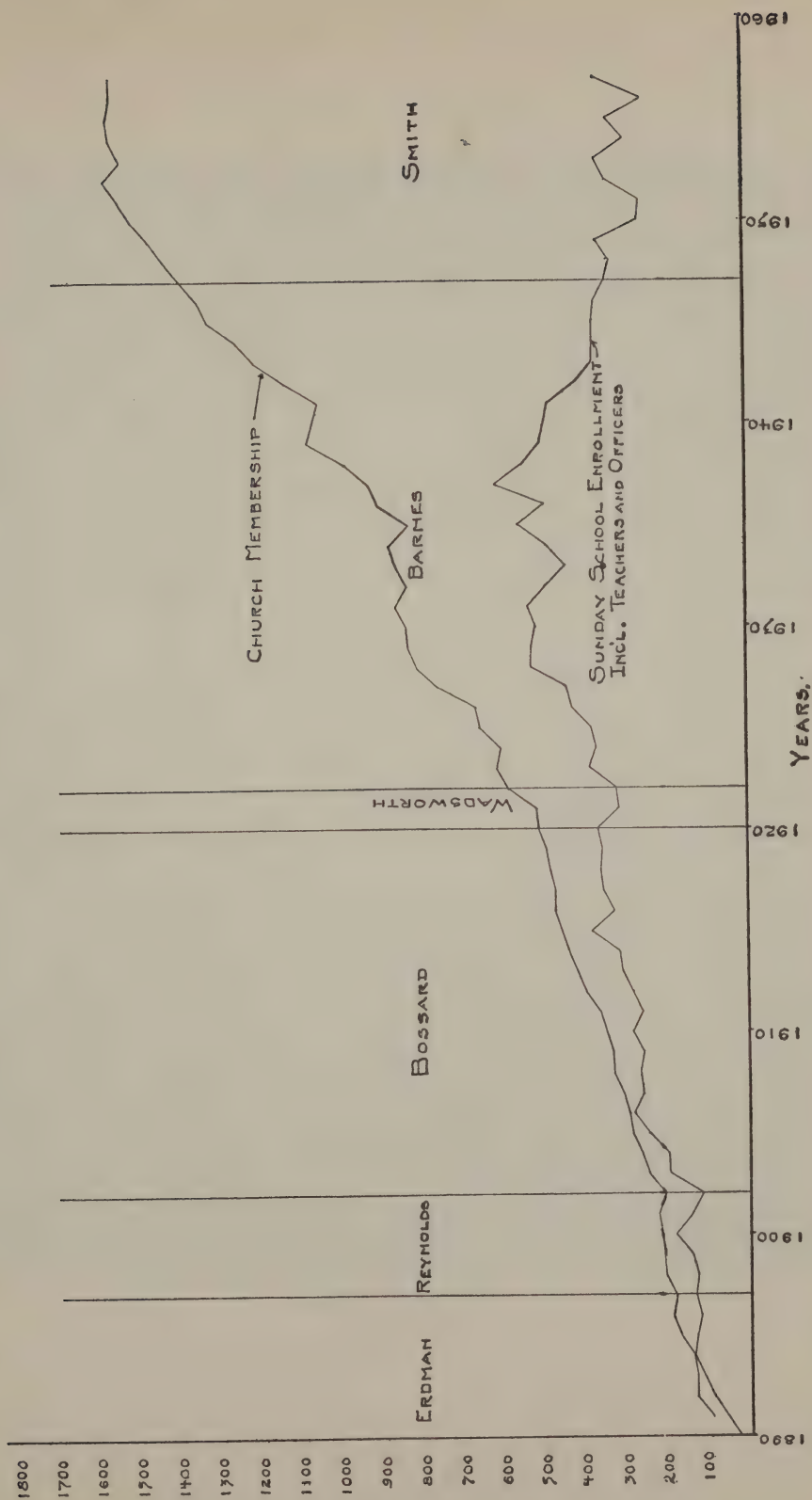
On Sunday morning November 30, 1958, Alvin Duane Smith announced his resignation as Minister of Overbrook Presbyterian Church, effective at the annual congregational meeting January 28, 1959. Dr. Smith will assume the important position as Executive of the Synod of New England. His resignation terminates a decade of fruitful ministry in which he endeared himself to all members of his congregation.

OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
PHILADELPHIA PA.

ADDITION TO MEMBERSHIP BY YEARS.

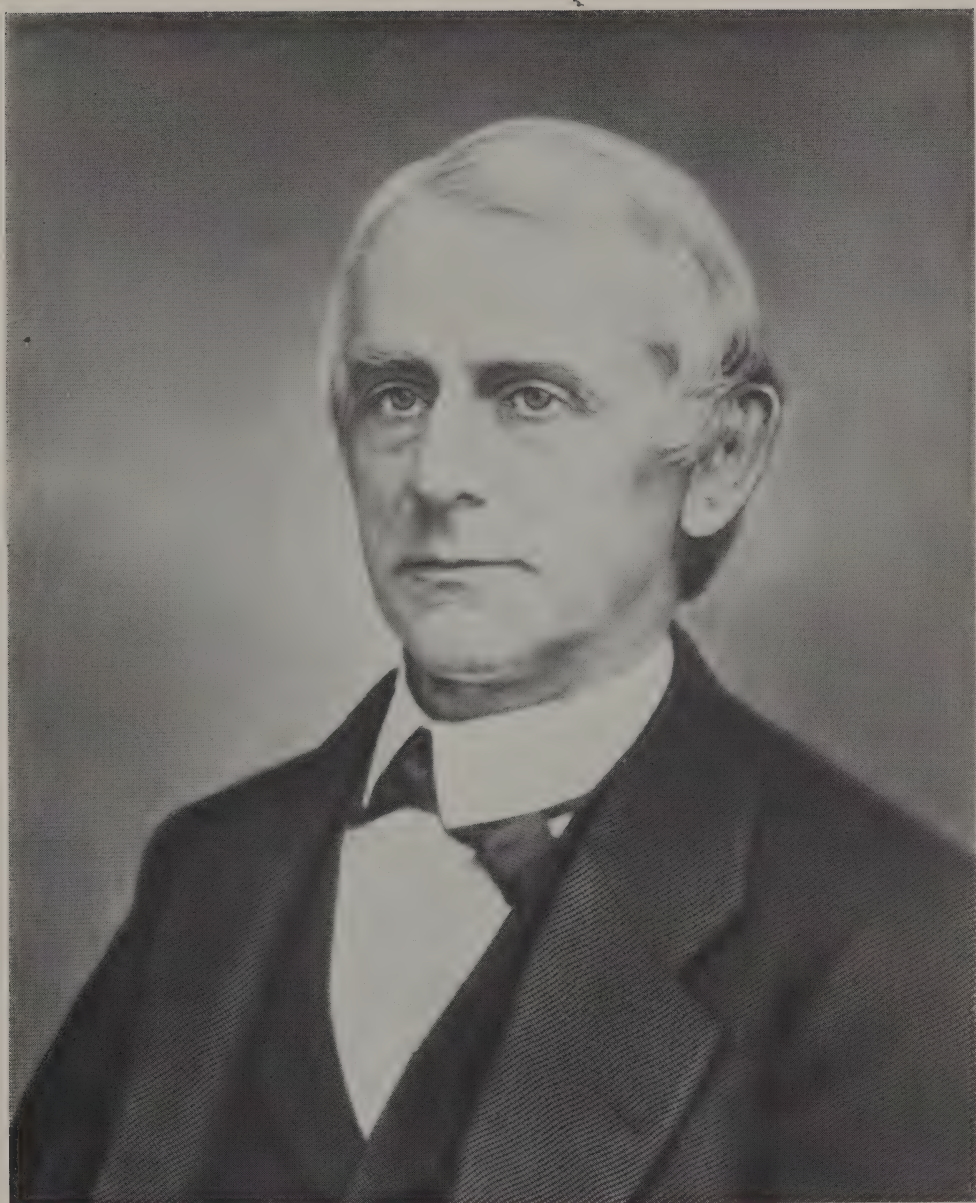


OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
PHILADELPHIA PA.







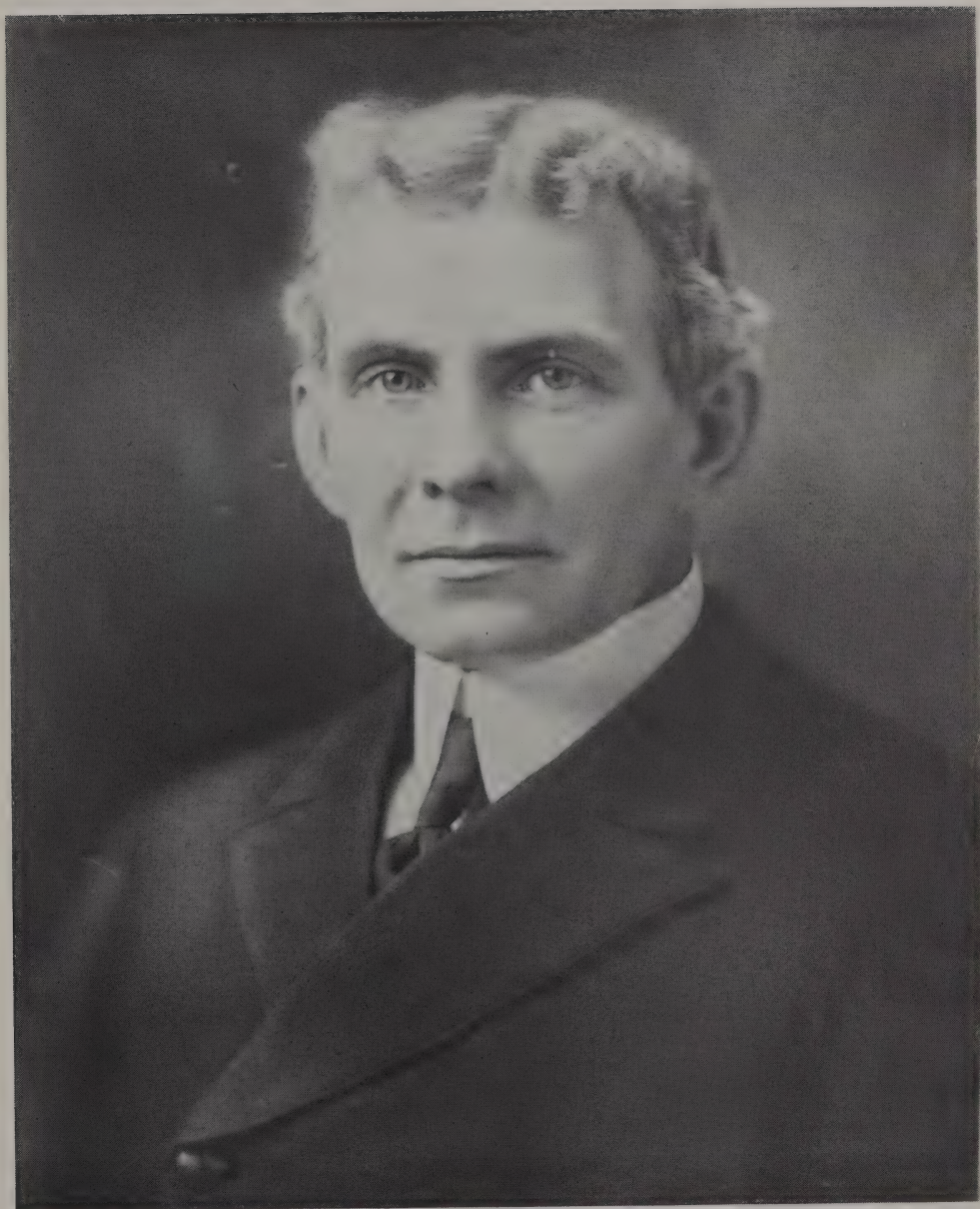


WISTER MORRIS—1888  
THE FOUNDER  
OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



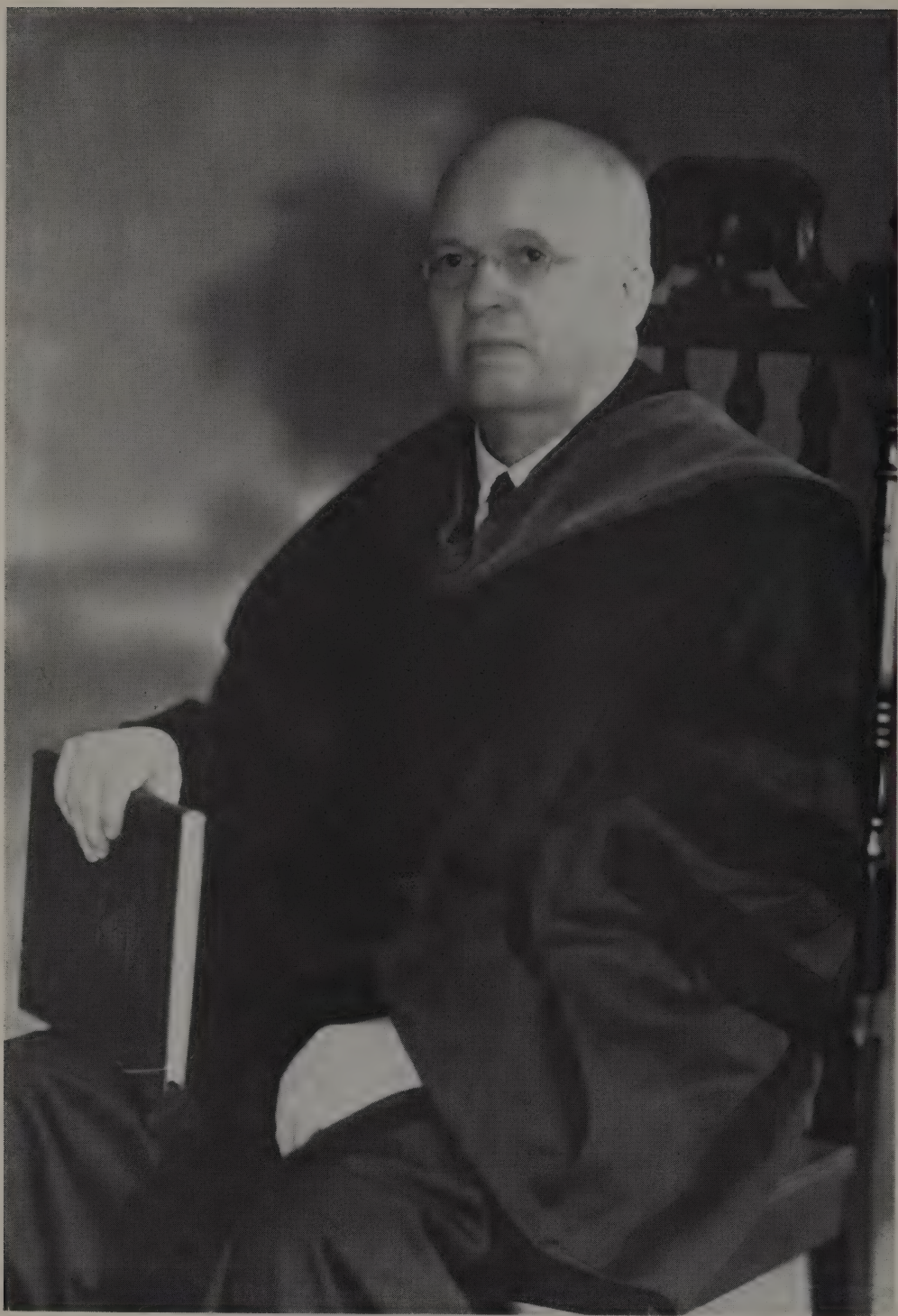
CHARLES R. ERDMAN  
THE FIRST MINISTER—1891-1897





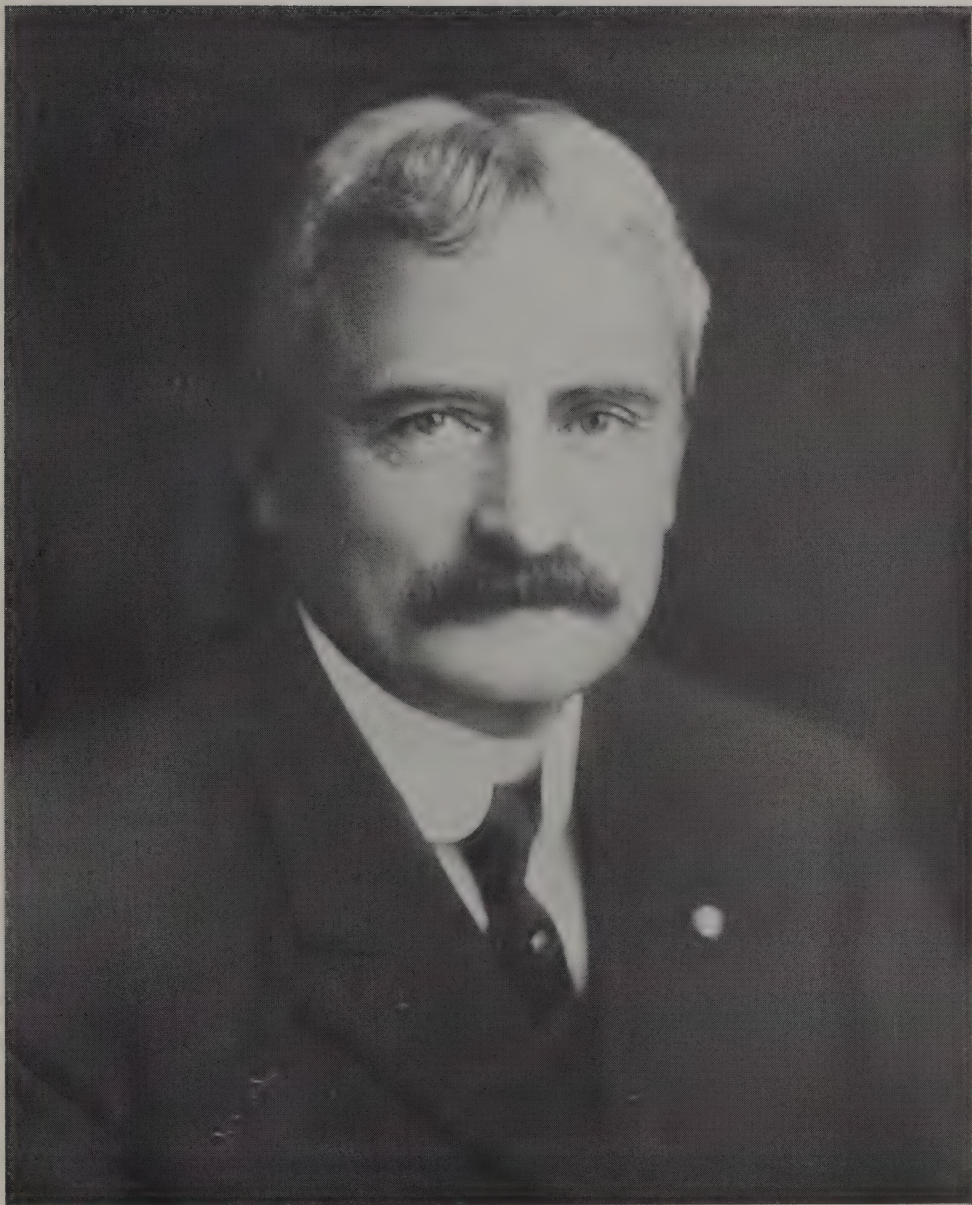
GEORGE REYNOLDS—1898-1902





GUIDO BOSSARD—1903-1920





CHARLES WADSWORTH—1920-1922



GEORGE EMERSON BARNES—1922-1948





ALVIN DUANE SMITH - 1948-1958



GUY M. KINMAN, JR.  
ASSISTANT MINISTER—1957



## VI

### The Church School and Young People's Work

"It is many years to look back, but it is with very fond memories that I still think of those days when you and Nettie were my Sunday School teachers in the little room on the City Line side of Overbrook Church. I can still see the little organ that Nettie played and those little chairs on which we sat.

"Before writing this, I went up to a bookcase in my room and brought down the Bible which you gave me in those early days. On the flyleaf is this inscription:

Mary Evans

from

Adelia L. Croft

Sunday School Teacher

December 25, 1893

"Sixty years ago! I can remember . . . some of the hymns that we sang at that time are still very precious to me. I also had other teachers; there were those whose memories mean much to me, but I think you are the only one living."

#### THE FIRST SUNDAY SCHOOL

These excerpts from a letter written by Mary Evans in 1953 to Mrs. Henry Delaplaine (Adelia Croft) bring back the earliest memories of the Sunday School at Overbrook Presbyterian Church. The school was just three years old at the time mentioned in the

letter. Mr. Franklin L. Sheppard was the Sunday School Superintendent.

The Sunday School was organized in 1890 with about sixty children, most of whose parents lived and worked on the Wistar Morris estate. The Sunday School expanded with the growing neighborhood. As Overbrook began to attract families to build homes in this area, more and more children came to the little Church and Sunday School on the corner of City Line and Lancaster Avenue.

The first school had only two divisions: the "Main School" and the "Primary School." Just nine teachers were needed to teach the classes in both of these divisions. Those who taught in the "Main School" conducted classes in the church sanctuary, using the pews for seats. The teacher stood to face the pupils. The "Primary School" was held in the small room at the left of the platform which, in the early days, was the minister's study. On Sunday small chairs for the children and a tiny reed organ were brought into the room.

The consecrated group of teachers held regular monthly meetings. People contributed books for a lending library—probably the only one in the neighborhood for some time. It was an active, though small Sunday School.

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING

By 1903, when J. Claude Bedford was superintendent, there were about 150 members or scholars. It had become increasingly difficult to conduct so many classes in the church, and the primary school was uncomfortably crowded in its small room. The congregation, too, had grown, and it soon became apparent

that the church needed to be enlarged; hence a Sunday School building was added. In May of 1904, construction of the building was started, and on Sunday, April 9, 1905, the enlarged church with a seating capacity of 450 and a new Sunday School building were dedicated.

The new Sunday School quarters consisted of a spacious room that could accommodate 125 scholars in four class areas. The largest of these rooms was for the primary department. There was a separate entrance, a cloak room and a lavatory for the use of the children. The three smaller class rooms were for the older members of the school. Sliding doors or "sashes" separated them from the assembly room. When these doors were opened, a still more spacious assembly room was made available. A separate room was maintained as a library. An attractive stone porch on the Lancaster Avenue side of the building permitted the children to enter either the church sanctuary or the main Sunday School without disturbing classes in session.

In a year's time the Sunday School enrollment reached two hundred, filling all available space in the new building. It was a lively school, led by Mr. William A. Furst, who was the superintendent until 1923. The classes studied the Catechism and the Bible, using the old Blakeslie lessons. Every Sunday, the classes stood to recite the "Golden Text" in unison. Awards were given to scholars who read the Old Testament or the New Testament through in a year. In 1907, a Junior Department was formed, composed of the older scholars of the Primary School.

#### CHRISTMAS ENTERTAINMENTS

The Christmas Entertainment in 1907 was probably typical of most churches of the period. The

teachers had decorated the church with greens and set up a tree for the Sunday before Christmas. The Sunday School program was held on the following Friday evening. The boys and girls gathered in the assembly room of the Sunday School and marched in procession to the decorated church, singing hymns as they marched. The atmosphere was one of subdued excitement as all joined in the singing of the Christmas carols and in listening to the Sunday School Superintendent tell a Christmas story. Following this, Santa appeared and distributed a box of candy to each child. It was an old-fashioned Sunday School Christmas observance and, as was customary, the children did not forget their gifts to others, collecting more than three hundred dollars, a portion of which was intended for the Presbyterian Orphanage.

The boys and girls of the Sunday School gave freely to benevolences, following the example of their parents. To the Italian Mission at Simpson and Callowhill Streets, the school gave generously. The pupils helped to support a Sunday School missionary in Idaho, and they contributed to foreign missions. The total annual giving to others often approximated two thousand dollars. The children learned where their money went through their studies of home and foreign missions.

#### EXPANSION

The Sunday School grew rapidly—in fact, the only Sunday that the Sunday School building was not well filled was on December 26, 1910, when a blizzard struck the city and school was cancelled.

One day in May, 1911, the teachers and officers of the Sunday School met at the home of Miss Margaret A. Montgomery. As soon as the meeting was called



to order by the superintendent, Mrs. Ewing arose. "The situation in the Primary and Junior Departments is getting out of hand, we are so crowded. Why, it is not safe to have so many children in our rooms! We need twice the floor space that we have now if we are to do our work properly," she added. "Thirty scholars and three teachers are crowded into a room that should accommodate only half that number."

"Three classes in the main room have overflowed into the church sanctuary," Mr. Marshall added quickly. "What a stir and disruption there is when these boys and girls get up and leave to go into the church for classes! Those left behind waste a good ten minutes waiting for that bustle and noise to subside."

"I know of parents who are not permitting their children to attend Sunday School at Overbrook because of the overcrowded conditions. They are even saying that the poor ventilation is unhealthy," another teacher added.

That evening the teachers addressed a resolution to the Board of Trustees. In it they outlined in detail how these overcrowded conditions had created a desperate need for more space.

The Trustees at length decided to enlarge the Sunday School by building a new addition at a cost of \$4,400. By the time the more spacious educational building was ready, there were nearly three hundred scholars ready to move in. With more room for classes, it was possible to departmentalize the school. An orchestra, made up of older pupils, played each Sunday at the opening exercises when the entire school, except for the Primary Department, met for assembly period. The superintendent led these exercises, which moved

along on a precise schedule. At the ringing of a bell on his desk, the scholars assembled. One ring and everyone stood up to sing the first hymn. Then followed a scriptural call to worship with the school responding. Another bell, and everyone sat down. Then came a hymn and the Bible reading. The dividing sash to the primary room was raised and the primary children were ready to join the rest of the school. All united in the morning prayer and a hymn. Attendance was marked, the offering taken, and after another hymn, the scholars went to their classes for twenty-five minutes; at the close of this period there was a warning bell. Five minutes later a second bell announced the end of the lesson period and everyone reassembled in the big room. For the next ten minutes the school practiced hymns, recited memory verses, or did other special work. Then came what was called the "talk from the desk." During this five minute period, the superintendent taught a brief lesson or told a story to illustrate the lesson which the pupils had just studied.

#### SUPERINTENDENTS FURST AND GRAY

Mr. Furst was superintendent of the Overbrook Sunday School for twenty years, except for a brief time between 1911 and 1917, when the Session asked him to be Director of Education and Mr. A. J. Butler acted as superintendent of the school. These were growing years—years when from 200 to 300 scholars were in attendance on Sunday morning. They were the years when the "Light Bearers" were organized—children who formed a society to study missions. During that period Dr. Bossard organized a young people's group. Because the regular monthly teachers' meetings were devoted mostly to business, it was found advisable to establish a teachers training course.

Children from the Overbrook School for the Blind attended the Sunday School in a group. At first they had a separate class, but in 1919 it was decided to combine them with the other pupils.

After Dr. and Mrs. Barnes came to Overbrook, Mrs. Barnes organized a Women's Bible Class which became an active part of the Sunday School. Overbrook Sunday School at that time had little resemblance to the original small school of sixty scholars! By 1923 its enrollment was well over 300.

Mr. Furst resigned in 1923 and Mr. Delbert Gray, Jr. was persuaded to take the office which he agreed to hold for one year, little dreaming that, like his predecessor, he would keep this responsibility for many years.

Planned activities and ever increasing enrollment soon made it evident that the physical equipment was inadequate and once again, it was time for expansion.

#### THE NEW CHURCH HOUSE

On April 30, 1924, at a special congregational meeting, the building committee was authorized by the congregation to proceed with a new building to house the Sunday School. It was a year before the asking of bids was authorized, and a contract given to Paul A. Davis, 3rd, architect and Henry E. Baton, builder, for \$250,000. On Sunday afternoon, October 11, 1925, church members gathered on the newly laid floor of the auditorium of the Church House to lay the date stone. There was just enough of the structure to give the people an idea of how large and beautiful the finished building would be. Dr. Barnes and Mr. Gray conducted the service, and Mr. Clarence H. Geist, chairman of the building committee, presented the cop-



per box containing historical documents. Dr. Erdman laid the stone as the first pastor of the church, and as Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. Everyone adjourned to the sanctuary for the dedication prayer led by Dr. William C. Covert, General Secretary of the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church. Dr. Charles R. Erdman delivered the address.

That winter no one seemed to mind the many adjustments in the schedule of the school because they knew that the future was going to be bright. The beginner's class was held in the manse. The primary department met on the balcony of the church; the junior and intermediate departments occupied the church auditorium. The Men's Association used the Overbrook Golf Club; the Missionary Society scheduled its meetings in the homes of members, and the Ladies' Aid Society met in Mrs. William Barnes' garage.

The new Church House and Sunday School building was dedicated on May 23, 1926 at a Founder's Day and Dedication service. The words of the litany of dedication voiced the hopes and faith of those present:

*To the Glory of God and the service of His Will,  
To the honor of Christ and the saving power of His  
Love,  
To the Rule of the Holy Spirit and the mastery of His  
Truth,  
For the training of youth in Christian ways of thought  
and conduct,  
For the building up of Christ-like character as the  
supreme end of life,  
For the increase of life in wisdom and stature and in  
favor with God and man,  
We dedicate this building.*



Dr. Barnes gave the charge to the people. Nelson Eddy, then a member of the quartette, sang. Dr. George E. Stewart of the theological seminary of Auburn, New York, gave the address followed by the singing of "O Jesus, I Have Promised." That same evening at the church service of worship, the general secretary for the Philadelphia Sunday School Association and the Philadelphia Federation of Churches spoke on the importance of work with children and youth.

That week two receptions marked the opening of the Church House for work and worship. One was for the members of the church and the people of the community. The second was for the Sunday School and the young people. The following day, Sunday, May 30, 1926, the church school held its first session in the new building.

It was a beautiful building—the very latest in efficient functional structure for the purpose it was to serve. As children, young people, and their teachers walked along the tree-shaded sidewalk parallel to Lancaster Avenue and turned into the wide court, they commented on the elegance of the modified Gothic structure with its gray stone walls, small-paned windows, and fine slate roof. Up the wide steps, one entered through any of the several double glass doors that led into a wide hall with a beautiful floor of colored slate. On the first Sunday morning that school was held in the new building, everyone assembled in the auditorium. There the Superintendent conducted a service of worship for the entire school. Led by the orchestra, nearly four hundred people of all ages lifted their voices in praise.

After this service, the pupils began departmental meetings and classes. The younger children found

two beautiful rooms awaiting them at the front of the building along the Lancaster Avenue side. For the Beginners there was a friendly room with warm, colored walls, a rug-covered floor and plenty of space to move about. The fireplace at the end gave the room a home-like atmosphere, in which a small child did not feel strange. The Primary Department also had a pleasant, sunny room, with plenty of space for the large round tables and little painted chairs. Off each of these rooms was a lavatory, easily accessible to the small children.

The Junior and Intermediate Department met upstairs. There were classrooms for these boys and girls opening off the balcony of the auditorium. Each classroom was large enough to hold a long oak table and a dozen or more matching chairs. At the far end of the balcony was a beautiful assembly room for the juniors, where they held worship and enjoyed other activities. Beyond, over the chapel, were more classrooms. How spacious and beautiful they were with gleaming hardwood floors and softly polished woodwork!

Downstairs, the adult class met in the chapel which was dedicated to the founder, Wistar Morris. It was a room of special beauty, with paneled walls, beamed ceiling, and a spacious fireplace. These features all combined to make the chapel sufficiently dignified for worship and yet elegant and suitable for receptions and meetings of a social nature. Its dual purpose was to stand the test of time. As a second meeting room, the informal Colonial Room, upstairs, met requirements for smaller groups and also doubled as the church parlor.

Word spread around the churches of Philadelphia that one of the finest Protestant educational buildings

in the United States could be seen at the corner of Lancaster Avenue and City Line, and several times a week groups of interested people came to Overbrook to go through the new church house.

The new building was put to use promptly by organizations of the church as well as by various community groups. Primarily, however, the church house was for the Sunday School. That the building was needed is clearly indicated by the rapid growth of the school after its completion. Attendance built up rapidly; 1929-30 was a peak year with 500 enrolled—600 counting the adult classes. It took a staff of 60 to 70 teachers and officers to conduct the school. These devoted workers invested many long hours in lesson preparation and teacher-training classes, also performing extra-curricular activities through the week. The monthly staff meeting invariably lasted until the late evening because of problems to be discussed and plans to be made. A Council of Christian Education, which had been in existence for some time, was responsible for the many-sided program of the educational work of the church.

#### CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP AND PROGRAMS

In 1946 Mr. Delbert Gray, Jr. felt it necessary to resign his position as General Superintendent. It was with genuine sorrow that teachers, officers and pupils saw Mr. Gray give up the work which he had performed so efficiently for 23 years.

Mrs. Frances L. Winchell who had been Superintendent of the Primary Department for over nine years was asked to fill the position of General Superintendent. She remained in that position until 1952, when her resignation was regretfully received. Mr. William H. Harman, Jr. then took over the responsibilities.



Under Mr. Harman's guidance, there were important innovations. Chief among these was the Family Night, instituted in 1952. This covered-dish supper, held twice a year, has met with unqualified success, as entire families gather at the church house for enjoyment and fellowship. Entertainment is usually provided by talented members of the group—often by some of the children and young people. Occasionally a well-known personality in the entertainment world is invited to arrange and produce a special program. Family Nights remain today an important part of the all-church program at Overbrook.

The assistant minister, Harold Neufeld, who had been active in the church school during his two years at Overbrook resigned in 1954. About this time Mrs. George Emerson Barnes retired as active teacher of the women's class which she had taught for more than thirty years. For a time it seemed impossible to work out the solution to this vacancy, but the Men's Bible Class invited the women to join with them and as a result of this merger, the new Adult Bible Class was created—a class which has become increasingly large and active.

In 1953 the name Sunday School was officially changed to "Church School," the latter being the accepted nomenclature for the program of Christian Education in Presbyterian churches.

When Robert L. Jansen came as assistant minister in 1954, the teacher-training program was accelerated. The Faith and Life Curriculum—materials prepared by the Board of Publication of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.—was officially adapted for use throughout the Overbrook Church School. Mr. Jansen together with the teachers and officers concentrated on increasing the enrollment of the school to somewhere near its previous level.



## YOUNG PEOPLE'S WORK

The young people's work, organized in the early years of Overbrook by Dr. Bossard, had moved along with an interesting program of discussion on Sunday evenings and occasional social events. During the First World War, however, this society lapsed, and it was in 1924 that a new society was organized. Dr. Barnes took the lead, inviting the young people in the Intermediate and Senior Departments to meet informally and discuss reorganization. They liked this idea and proceeded enthusiastically. At their first meeting on November 9, 1924, they formulated requirements for membership and projected a program which was to be carried out by members of the society. The young people held frequent social affairs in the Church House. Games and refreshments always attracted a goodly number and created a feeling of fellowship. At the close of 1925 the society decided without question to continue for another year. For ten years thereafter, the Young People's Society went along as usual, with forty to fifty in attendance at the Sunday evening discussion programs.

In 1936, new vitality and interest were injected into the group. The name was changed to the Young People's Fellowship. A constitution consisting of seven articles was carefully drawn up. A Youth Council of ten members was elected. Representatives to the Council were selected from the Young People's Fellowship, the Sunday School, the Ushers' Association, and the Junior Young People's Fellowship. Members at large were chosen by the Session of the church.

## YOUTH BUDGET

Dr. Barnes presented the Youth Fellowship with the idea of a budget of their own, a Youth Budget.

The young people were completely in accord with this idea and consequently the Youth Council drew up a budget to include both the local church needs and benevolences. Teams of young people canvassed all of the youth of the church, and secured pledges from them. This money was to be given weekly, in special envelopes. The Youth Budget gave young people a share in the responsibility of the work of their church, both locally and on a denominational level. It opened new fields of interest and activity; meetings were better attended and more young people took part in the planning and carrying out of their program.

In 1937, the president of the Youth Council was invited to be an associate member of the Board of Trustees. The young people were asked to serve as associate members of the Session. This gave the youth of Overbrook Church insight into the ways these boards functioned. They had opportunity to learn for themselves about the work of the Trustees and the Session and the way in which these official bodies discharged their church duties. Thus, the Youth Council was an excellent training ground for future leaders of the church, and today some of the young men who served in these capacities are Elders, Deacons and Trustees.

Younger boys and girls of Overbrook saw the young people's fellowship and longed for a similar society of their own. And so, in 1938, a Junior Young People's Fellowship was formed for the young people under the age of sixteen. That year there were two youth dinners at Overbrook, one in the fall and another in the winter. At the mid-winter dinner the young people decided that they wanted to raise \$500 for the Fiftieth Anniversary Fund for the new chancel and organ. Twenty teams with ten young people on each

were organized, and they proceeded to launch an energetic drive. The amount was oversubscribed. That same year, 1938, attendance at Youth Fellowship meetings reached the highest attendance mark of 115. Sunday evening vespers were inaugurated which met with immediate approval by the young people. Dr. Barnes took a deep interest and active part in the planning and work of the young people. He was especially proud, as were all Overbrook people, when the Youth Budget Plan, which had originated at Overbrook, was promoted throughout the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. It had worked at Overbrook Presbyterian Church; it could work elsewhere!

#### YOUTH WORK IN WORLD WAR II

The Second World War took a heavy toll of members, both in the Church School and in the Youth Program. As an increasing number of young men went into the armed services, it finally became apparent that the older Youth Fellowship would have to be suspended. Then too, gasoline rationing limited automobile travel. Moreover, the neighborhood around the church was changing from one of families with growing children to a neighborhood of older families or single people. The construction of large apartment houses in the area and the difficulty of maintaining large old homes with the wartime restriction, reduced membership in the church school and youth groups. Each year fewer children and young people lived within walking distance of Overbrook church. Those who moved farther out on the Main Line or into Delaware County could not spare the gasoline for travel between their homes and the church. Slowly, the attendance at Church School and Youth Fellowship began to drop, but the quality of work and teaching held to its former high



standard. Topics for study and discussion assumed a personal, searching tone; young people were thinking deeply and wanted to know the answers to many questions that had to do with living in the Twentieth Century.

#### USHERS ASSOCIATION

The Ushers Association had grown directly from the Youth Fellowship. The idea had been conceived in connection with a group of older teenagers who, in 1924, formed what was known as the Sunday Boy's Club. There were about twenty-five of these young men who wanted to do something for their church. Dr. Barnes suggested that they act as ushers for the eleven o'clock Sunday morning service. Even during the Second World War, when their numbers were greatly depleted, tradition and loyalty to Overbrook Church held them together. An ushers manual was drawn up and printed so that ushers might know exactly how to conduct themselves and so that they would realize the importance of their position.

#### REVIVAL OF YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Robert L. Foulkes began his work as pastor's assistant with special responsibility for the young people's work and the church school in 1945. Through his efforts the Youth Council was revived and the Youth Budget was again raised to its former level of approximately 200 subscribers, with a budget of over a thousand dollars. The twenty-one members of the Youth Council continued, under his guidance, to meet each month and to supervise and direct all of the youth activities. The young people cleaned, painted and furnished a large room in the basement which they called the "Green Room." They met there for fun and fellowship after the Youth Vespers.



The return of the 226 young men and women who had gone into service in the Armed Services did much to bring new life to the young people's work. The Senior Youth Fellowship was revived, and the Ushers Association became more active. In remembrance of those who had died in the war, in an impressive ceremony held Sunday, April 8, 1945, the young people planted two dogwood trees on the side lawn of the church house.

Denominational and interdenominational summer conferences strengthened the leadership among Overbrook's young people; twelve individuals from the church signed up for summer conferences each year. The Session created a fund to defray part of the expenses of the delegates to these conferences. In addition, an informal summer program at the church was planned so that those who were in the area might get together during the summer months. These occasions took the form of discussion meetings, sports, picnics and other activities.

By the fall of 1950, three young people's discussion groups were being held each Sunday evening—indicating a "return to normalcy" after the disruption of the war years. The organization of the Festival Chorus in 1951 had much to do with the new vitality in youth work. Opportunities to sing occasionally at church services and to present special programs held the interest of those in the chorus. As will be mentioned in Chapter VII, the project of purchasing an ambulance for the Overbrook Hospital at Chieng Rai was initiated in 1951 by the young people of the church.

Yet another Overbrook Church innovation was introduced by the young people. In 1952 the first coffee hour was proposed and held by the Young Adults, an

organization which had started the previous year. This caught the imagination and interest of all who realized that this occasion for fellowship after the eleven o'clock service had great potential value. In a short time the coffee hour was made a regular part of the Sunday church program and has been helpful in making the members of our widespread congregation better acquainted.

The Young Adult group increased in both membership and activities, assuming responsibility for projects such as the church nursery during the Sunday morning services, and a Spiritual Workshop discussion group on Sunday mornings, as well as several all-church social events. With more emphasis on audio-visual material given to present-day teaching, Overbrook Church School has provided these aids throughout the school.

Genuine Christian devotion, a high quality of teaching, and much careful thought and planning are being expended on the work with the children and young people at Overbrook Church today. Even though changes in the neighborhood make the numbers smaller than in the past, Overbrook Church School and the Young People's Fellowship are organizations of which the church is proud. The long tradition of service and the goals of development of Christian character have created a quality of Christian education for the children and youth of Overbrook Church which is second to none.

## VII

### Overbrook Church—Abroad and at Home

One Sunday morning, early in 1895, William Harris, who had been a classmate of Mr. Erdman at Princeton Theological Seminary, was the guest preacher. In the course of his sermon, Mr. Harris mentioned that very soon he had hoped to go to Siam as a missionary.

#### A MISSIONARY TO SIAM

After the service, some members of the congregation, visiting with the young preacher, learned that the only reason he was not in Siam at that very moment was because the Board of Foreign Missions lacked money to pay his passage. As soon as this news got around, Overbrook people decided to raise funds for a steamship ticket to Siam. Within a short time, the missionary was on his way to Chieng Rai, a Presbyterian mission in northern Siam. It took him more than two months to go from New York to Bangkok, and then another two months' trek by houseboat and elephant before he reached Chieng Rai.

#### OVERBROOK MEMORIAL HOSPITAL AT CHIENG RAI

William Harris was shortly succeeded by Dr. W. A. Briggs, a medical missionary, who, in 1897, was

sent to fill the great need for a physician to these people who lived in the remote jungles of Siam. Dr. Briggs was a dedicated man of considerable professional skill; his resourcefulness counted for much in establishing medical missionary services in a place like Chieng Rai. A person of many talents, Dr. Briggs was a musician, poet, a first-class Lao scholar, a fine preacher and evangelist, as well as an excellent physician. On his first furlough, Dr. Briggs visited and preached in Overbrook Church. The congregation was greatly impressed by his ability, and charmed by his personality.

The Missionary spoke of the need for a hospital at Chieng Rai. This idea immediately found favor with the family of John B. Gest. Mr. Gest had been an Elder at Overbrook Church and one of its most active members. The family decided to erect a hospital at Chieng Rai as a memorial to John B. Gest, who had had such a deep and long-time interest in the work of the Presbyterian Church. At Dr. Briggs' suggestion, it was named, "Overbrook Memorial Hospital." Thus, a bridge of Christian sympathy and understanding was created which reached across the world.

During the twenty years that Dr. Briggs continued to serve at Chieng Rai, he and his family were called upon to make numerous sacrifices. When the children could no longer receive adequate schooling in Siam, Mrs. Briggs took them to Canada for further education. This family separation in itself was far from easy. During World War I, in spite of his own ill health, Dr. Briggs insisted on staying at the hospital to continue the work. He treated his patients and carried on his medical services in an atmosphere of risk and danger. In 1918, his health completely broken, he was forced to return to his home and family in



Canada, where he died the following year. During his long hospitalization, Dr. Briggs was decorated with the badge of Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for having remained at his post during the war, thereby aiding the cause of the Allies.

#### DR. BEACH SUCCEEDS DR. BRIGGS

Dr. William A. Beach was named successor to Dr. Briggs. The story of the Beach family is part of the very fabric of the history of Overbrook Presbyterian Church from 1918 until 1946. Many were the Overbrook visits that Dr. Beach made when on leave. As our people heard him describe work that was being carried on at Chieng Rai, both their interest and their support increased. In 1927, the hospital had to be rebuilt; the jungle had taken its toll of the buildings and a new dispensary was needed to accommodate the out-patient department which had become the largest part of the work of the hospital. Up-to-date equipment was badly needed if the work was to continue properly.

William P. Gest, always a generous patron of the Overbrook Hospital, contributed \$4500 toward a new dispensary. The people of Overbrook Church, inspired by Mr. Gest's initial gift, raised more than the necessary \$2500 to make up the balance required for this addition to the hospital. But Overbrook people gave more than money. Led by Mrs. Gest who had always done a great deal for the hospital, the women renewed their efforts in making surgical garments and other needed supplies. They packed innumerable large boxes containing not only hospital supplies but also garden tools, hairpins, buttons, marbles, dolls, slates, and many other needed articles.

In 1931, when Dr. and Mrs. Beach were in Philadelphia as guests of the church, they were elected into

full membership by the congregation; Dr. Beach was made a ruling Elder. The Beach family knew then that they had a church home with many interested friends in America. Overbrook Church people also showed their friendship by helping make a college education possible for the Beach children.

#### IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II ON THAILAND

The work at Chieng Rai went well for several years until catastrophe struck with World War II. Early in 1941 Dr. Beach, together with other missionaries in northern Siam, escaped to Burma. The hospital was taken into protective custody by the Thai Government for the remainder of the war period. Dr. Beach was transferred to a mission station in India where he stayed until his retirement in 1946.

#### DR. MCDANIEL SUCCEEDS DR. BEACH

After the war Dr. Edwin B. McDaniel succeeded Dr. Beach at Chieng Rai. To this deeply religious and very capable young man fell the arduous task of getting the hospital back into running order. Fortunately, through the efforts of loyal native workers, much of the hospital equipment had been protected and kept in repair. But there was a great deal to do; a new roof was needed, plus wheel chairs, bedside tables, a DDT sprayer, and so forth. Dr. McDaniel also realized that medical services should extend into the interior. To accomplish this, it would be necessary to have an ambulance that could travel over the rough roads and through the mud. With such an ambulance, Dr. McDaniel could hold clinics for people in remote villages and transport the critically ill in need of extended treatment back to the hospital.

## OVERBROOK AMBULANCE

On October 29, 1950, "Overbrook Hospital Sunday," Dr. Claude Conley, Executive Secretary for the Synod of Philadelphia, told the congregation of a recent visit to Overbrook Hospital, describing in fascinating detail the work which was being done and stressing the need for an ambulance. Overbrook young people became interested in the purchase of an ambulance and began at once to raise the necessary money. Through their enthusiasm, it became a church-wide project. When, in January, 1952, the vehicle arrived at Bangkok, the docks were crowded with wondering, grateful people who watched the vehicle being lifted from the ship's hold and then driven off for the five-hundred mile trip to Chiang Rai. Dr. McDaniel and his medical staff put the ambulance into immediate service.

## OVERBROOK HOSPITAL BECOMES SELF-SUPPORTING

In 1955, the Board of Foreign Missions announced that Overbrook Hospital had "grown up" and could be placed under the jurisdiction of the Thai people. It had become self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting—all of which was cause for rejoicing among Overbrook Church friends who had sponsored its growth over those fifty years. The interest of the church in the hospital continues and the work of Dr. and Mrs. McDaniel is very close to Overbrook people.

## OVERBROOK IN WYOMING

Nearer home, in Lingle, Wyoming, a Home Missions parish was able to expand its influence because of the efforts of Overbrook Presbyterian Church people. During the 1920's, our church maintained close touch with the missionary there, the Reverend Harry



Bicksler. Financial aid as well as much needed material help was sent from Overbrook to that small village in Wyoming.

In 1925, a rather unusual shipment went from the church to Lingle. It was larger and heavier than any of the other boxes, for it was a complete steam heating plant for the Community House of the mission! On its arrival, the Wyoming community had a day-long celebration which culminated in a basket dinner on Thursday, February 12, 1925. Six teams and wagons were enlisted to help transport the people in surrounding areas to the mission. The occasion was heralded by a broadside announcement which read, in large bold type: "Heating Plant Here! Our Philadelphia friends have made us a gift of this heating plant . . . and also paid the freight!"

#### MR. BICKSLER GOES TO EUROPE AND OHIO

In 1927, Mr. Bicksler was cited by the Board of National Missions as one of its outstanding workers. As a mark of appreciation, the Board arranged for him to go to Ireland, Scotland, and Denmark for conferences and study during his sabbatical leave. Overbrook Church contributed generously for this trip.

Overbrook support of the mission at Lingle, Wyoming, continued until 1932, when Mr. Bicksler was transferred to the Parish of the Templed Hills in southern Ohio.

Through Mr. Bicksler's new charge, Overbrook Presbyterian Church became interested in a group of five Welsh Presbyterian Churches in southern Ohio, known as "The Parish of the Templed Hills." The Board of National Missions sponsored these small rural churches that preserved the old Welsh customs



of parish organization. The Miami Avenue Church in Columbus, Ohio, also became a friend of the Parish of the Templed Hills. Through the financial assistance and active interest of these two city churches, the five rural churches in Ohio were able to have one minister and a strong "Larger Parish Program." As had been the case with Lingle, Wyoming, Overbrook men and women sent far more than money to assist in the Welsh rural parish of the Templed Hills of Ohio.

#### OVERBROOK IN WEST VIRGINIA AND FLORIDA

During these same years, Overbrook Presbyterian Church contributed to the support of a home missions project at Dunton, West Virginia, under the direction of the Reverend E. V. Black, and also sent regular aid to a National Missionary, the Reverend Irwin K. McArthur, in Florida who served as an itinerant pastor in outlying areas around Miami—a project that continues today.

#### THE SECOND ITALIAN CHURCH OF PHILADELPHIA

From 1927 to 1940, Overbrook Church people had a deep interest in the Second Italian Church of Philadelphia.

In 1905, Mr. A. A. Scott invited six small Italian boys to meet for Sunday School in his back yard at 313 North 65th Street. Those six boys soon brought their friends. All during that summer, twenty-three children met under the shade of a pear tree to receive Christian instruction. The parents of these small children soon became interested, and before long they formed the nucleus for a church. This little group of worshippers in time grew so large that it became necessary to locate a place in which to hold services.

For four years the basement of the Patterson Memorial Church was used for this purpose.

In 1909 these Italian-Americans built their own church. For several years the Women's Home Missionary Society of the Presbytery of Philadelphia supervised and helped support this church—the Second Italian Presbyterian Church. By 1915, the congregation numbered 211 members and the Sunday School enrollment was 254. For ten more years the Home Missionary Society shepherded the young church. Then, on June 10, 1925, the work of the Second Italian Presbyterian Church was placed under the supervision of Overbrook Presbyterian Church, which assumed major responsibility for its support. The Reverend Francis DeSimone was called to the pastorate.

The church developed rapidly. A committee on finance and program was chosen with representatives from the Overbrook Church, trustees of the Presbytery, as well as representatives from the Italian Church. Dr. George Emerson Barnes, chairman of the committee, and Mr. DeSimone enjoyed a happy workable relationship as friends and co-workers for nearly fifteen years.

During those years, Overbrook people worked closely with their Italian Church neighbors. They helped them to make improvements to their church property, assisted them in meeting bills so that even during the depression years they were able to operate without deficit and without public appeal for support. Overbrook men and women taught craft classes for boys and sewing classes for girls. There was a dramatic club, and a choral group which performed at Overbrook Church on many occasions, to the delight of everyone. Each year the Italian Church people held a dinner, with their Overbrook friends as invited

guests. Yards of spaghetti were consumed and there was much singing and good fellowship. An anniversary celebration in honor of Mr. DeSimone's tenth year at the church and the tenth year of relationship with Overbrook Presbyterian Church, was marked by warm, friendly expressions of appreciation. Dr. Barnes' name was frequently on the lips of the members of the Second Italian Church—they called him "Our best friend."

In 1940, the oversight of the work at the Second Italian Church was placed in the hands of the Trustees of the Presbytery and the Superintendent of City Missions. But Overbrook Church continued its interest for some time by making monthly contributions to the expense of the church.

#### MISSIONARY INTEREST TODAY

Traditionally, Overbrook Church has always included in its budget money for missions to be used at the discretion of the Mission Boards. This has been in addition to the special projects described here. Actually, these projects were but a small part of the total benevolent funds of Overbrook Church. Thus, when the Boards of National and Foreign Missions changed their policy to one of undesignated gifts for missions, the change was not a new concept to Overbrook people.

Today, with this program of undesignated giving, the interest of Overbrook people in home and foreign missions is still very keen. Frequently specific stations are indicated for special study, interest and prayer. Through this plan, the Francis Newton Hospital in India, work in the Punjab, and the work of Sunday School Missions in the United States, become vital, as church members read and study and pray about

these stations. The traditions of generous giving to others continues. Thus, the bond of sympathy and understanding which was created many years ago by the founders and early members of Overbrook Church reaches around the world and is furthered in the present time.

*From oldest time, on farthest shores,  
Beneath the pine or palm,  
One unseen Presence she adores,  
With silence, or with psalm.*



## VIII

### Women's and Men's Organizations

On October 10, 1895, Mrs. John B. Gest, president of the Women's Home Missionary Society at Overbrook Church since its reorganization in 1893, was presiding at a meeting of the society at the manse. From a pocket in her full skirt, she drew out a letter. Unfolding it, she read:

Port Hope, Michigan

Dear Friends:

You asked my needs. It is very cold here and if I had a fur coat, I could make pastoral calls into the wilderness areas of this country with greater comfort. As it is now, it is difficult to bear the cold in the worst part of the winter for more than two hours each day and thus reach the farther outposts of our Presbyterian Mission here. I can buy such a coat for twenty-five dollars.

Sincerely yours,  
(signed) Rev. Alex Barclay

"What is your pleasure regarding this matter?" Mrs. Gest asked the group. Miss Blanche Weakley, secretary-treasurer of the society spoke: "Last year we sent a large box to a missionary in the Indian Territory out West; the year before that, I believe, our box went to a missionary in Nebraska. This year, what would you think of making up our box for Mr. Barclay and their three children?" The others quickly assented.

## BOXES FROM OVERBROOK

All during the remainder of October the ladies of the Home Missionary Society were busy sewing and purchasing various items to go into the box. At the November meeting, the secretary reported: "Twenty-five dollars for a fur coat, and a box with the contents valued at three hundred dollars was sent to the Reverend and Mrs. Alex Barclay, home missionaries at Port Hope, Michigan."

The following year two boxes from Overbrook women went even farther west—to Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where a missionary family with four children received clothing, bedding, literature, groceries, and toys for the children. Preparing these boxes was a considerable undertaking. All materials were new and of good quality. Often the quantity sent required two or three separate boxes to hold everything. Mr. Charles Chipley, of Merion, an official of the Pennsylvania Railroad and a member of the church, saw to it that shipments were forwarded without any expense for freight.

In those early days there were two missionary societies at Overbrook Church: The Women's Home Missionary Society and the Women's Foreign Missionary Society.

## WOMEN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The little scene described at the opening of this chapter typifies the work of the Women's Home Missionary Society in the first several years of its organization. Its energies were devoted almost entirely to preparing boxes; then, as the women became interested in the various mission stations which they were aiding, the group began to study the work of the Presbyterian

Church at those frontiers of America. In 1903, as part of this interest, the women sent all of the money in their treasury to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to help build a school for boys. The society's keen interest in this school led to the development of a study program which included a review of the work of this mission school.

In Philadelphia, the Women's Home Missionary Society became interested in the Italian Mission, which was under the Presbyterian Board of Missions. This concern was one which continued for many years. Another "cause" that is mentioned frequently in the minutes of the society in those early days, was that of the freed men in Virginia. The Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A. as a denomination was carrying on a program of work for the freed slaves, trying to educate them and to provide for their material needs, and this society assisted gladly.

#### WOMEN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Miss Emma Barr was president of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society at its organization in 1893. The program of this society was designed to acquaint members with the work of the Presbyterian Church abroad. The members packed boxes and sent them as far away as China and India. Money was raised for specific mission work, such as that of Dr. Jessica Carlton's Hospital in Ambala, India.

The monthly meetings of the Women's Foreign Missionary Society were vigorous. There was always a period for Bible reading and devotions. Sometimes there were speakers—missionaries on furlough, travelers, or someone from the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church. Frequently, the women conducted their own study, taking various phases of a

topic and preparing reports. Some of the programs centered on evangelistic and teaching work in far-off countries such as Mexico, China, Korea, Siam, and South America in which the Presbyterian Church conducted missionary work. Pamphlets, tracts, and books assisted the women as they gathered information.

In late April or early May, 1903, the women inaugurated Missionary teas. The silver offering at these teas was applied to a specific project. Because both the Home and Foreign Missionary Societies combined to give the teas, the offering alternated between these two fields of work.

At least once a year the Women's Foreign Missionary Society met with the Presbyterial to hear an outstanding speaker. As early as 1898, the Overbrook women held a joint meeting with the societies of the Narberth and the Lower Merion Presbyterian Churches.

#### WOMEN'S FOREIGN AND HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY

In November of 1903 the Home and Foreign Missionary Societies merged into one organization. Actually, as has been noted, the Home Missionary Society devoted most of its energy to preparing boxes for home missions. The women continued this valuable service under what the new society called a "Home Mission Band." Boxes were also packed for foreign missionaries by the new society.

Mission study books made their appearance at Overbrook in 1919. At first, they were put to only occasional use, since many of the women preferred hearing first-hand reports from missionaries. From a small society in 1903 which averaged a dozen or so ladies at a meeting and for which forty dollars was



the annual budget, the society grew in twenty years to one which had an average attendance of from thirty-five to fifty women, and required a budget of well over a thousand dollars. Money came not only from pledges and gifts of members, but much of it was raised by hard work: cake sales, bazaars and other events.

#### MISSION STUDY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

At the beginning of this century a little group of children met the first Saturday of every month to learn about missions. This was called the "Children's Band." Agnes Reid was the first president of this society. Another group, the "Young Ladies' Missionary Society," met at three-thirty the first Friday of every month. This organization continued more or less spasmodically until the Westminster Guild was organized in 1922 with Florence Evans as its president.

#### "MAKE YOUR PLANS LARGE"

"If God be your partner, make your plans large," was the motto adopted by the Women's Foreign and Home Missionary Society in 1922. In that year the "Standard of Excellence" was awarded to the society by the Presbyterial. To merit this award, the society showed an increase in membership and benevolences. The society sponsored the Westminster Guild by shepherding its program and sending a delegate to the summer conference at Blairstown, N. J. More and more, Overbrook women were becoming interested and involved in Presbyterial and in city-wide missionary efforts.

Within their own church, too, the women reached out. An important event in 1923 was the initiation of

an all-day rally in cooperation with the Ladies Aid Society. Seventy-two women attended. The program consisted of sewing in the morning, a luncheon at noon with attractive tables for eight complete with new linen, silver, and flowers. In the afternoon all adjourned to the manse for a meeting. There, the women of Overbrook Church accepted the responsibility for raising more than \$1,700 for missions. Many of those present must have remembered the early days when a gathering and undertaking of this magnitude would have been impossible and even fantastic to contemplate.

Shortly after Dr. Barnes came to Overbrook Church, he brought to the Women's Foreign and Home Missionary Society a vision of the value of using the mission study books. In 1924 the plan was attempted of having two mission study classes: one for home and the other for foreign mission study. Through these classes, the women delved deeper into the history and meaning of missions. These study classes continued for many years—proof of their success.

Those who were in the society at that time remember with pleasure the Spring Garden Fete held annually on the grounds of Mrs. Henry Delaplaine's home in Merion, or, in case of rain, in the new Church House. The hard work and weeks of preparation were worth the trouble, for the proceeds usually approximated one thousand dollars. Still another money-raising event was the Christmas Pantry Sale—hard work for many, but successful.

#### WORLD WAR II AND WORLD SERVICE SOCIETY

During the years of World War II, the missionary society continued its interest in missions. In spite of problems of transportation, the women met to do over-

seas work, to gather clothing for Church World Service, to make surgical dressings, and to study topics which reflected concern for the times. Under the able leadership of its presidents, Mrs. Shepley Evans and Mrs. Hugh Robertson, the work, worship and study of home and foreign missions continued at Overbrook Church. There was no lack of speakers for these meetings, since many missionaries had been called back to the United States for the duration of the war. The serious tone of the times was broken by the gracious and lovely spring luncheons, to which all women of the church were invited.

As 1949 drew to a close, it became evident that the women of the church were working together more closely than ever before. Perhaps the war had drawn the women's organizations together, perhaps it was the trend—at least it was apparent that many forces were combining to produce an atmosphere of greater unity.

In February, 1950, the Women's Missionary Society changed its name to the World Service Society in line with this larger outreach. For two years, the missionary interests of the women continued under this new society.

In 1952, the group voted in favor of adopting the plan for Presbyterian women, known as The Women's Association, to be treated later in this chapter. The secretary then wrote in her book, "We have loved the old Missionary Society and the new World Service Society, and we hope that in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in our new organization, a part of our missionary zeal will find its way into each unit of work."

## LADIES AID SOCIETY

In 1910, ten women met at Overbrook Presbyterian Church to consider the need for an organization which would have for its chief concern the making of articles for the poor and needy, both locally in Philadelphia and for mission stations. This group became the Ladies Aid Society. The hands of members were seldom idle for they had no difficulty securing the names of families who needed help. Some of these were minister's families living in remote parts of our country, whose names were secured through the Board of Ministerial Relief. When a needy family was assigned to the Ladies Aid, the women would make out a shopping list of items to be purchased: clothing, sheets, toys, and other things, based on a description of the family needs. Many articles were made by the women. Some of the sewing was done at home; more of it was done at the church. Mrs. William Gest kept the sewing machines in perfect order. The need for garments, food and furnishings was frequently so desperate that the women had difficulty deciding which appeal to work on first.

Many of the boxes packed by Overbrook Church women were for missionary friends in whom the church was interested. The Bicksler's who were missionaries first in Lingle, Wyoming, and then for the Parish of the Temple Hills in Southern Ohio, were frequent recipients.

Every year boxes were dispatched to the hospital at Miraj, India, which was a special missionary project in which Overbrook Church people were interested. The work of sewing and making bandages for the Miraj hospital required many days of cutting, sewing and pressing. Material was purchased by the



bolt to make quantities of pajamas, underclothing, and other cotton garments. Closer home, the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia received bandages, towels, maternity gowns, table cloths, tray cloths, and other needed items—all made by the women in the Ladies Aid Society at Overbrook Church.

As we visualize the old record of the Ladies Aid Society, we see some twenty devoted women meeting all day, two days a month, very busily cutting out garments, stitching, doing the finishing by hand, and then packing boxes. In reading the long lists of articles that went into these boxes it is difficult to understand how this small group of women accomplished so much. Theirs was a dedicated spirit, reinforced by hard work and by hands that never wearied.

#### THE GUILD

In 1932, the Ladies Aid Society changed its name to The Guild. During that year and several which followed, frequent meetings were held in conjunction with the Women's Bible Class. Sewing for the Red Cross was incorporated into the program and there was much to do that first year—an assignment to make a hundred dresses was one of the large projects.

The Ladies Aid, and later The Guild, had far more to its credit than the work of their hands. They had enjoyed a strong bond of Christian fellowship. This we know, for Miss E. Rosamund Jack, secretary for many years, had a way of slipping into her carefully detailed records of the meetings such notations as: "We had a very merry time," "The tea was delicious," "We did not want to leave, it was so pleasant." "The women worked faithfully in a cheerful and happy atmosphere." Such was the spirit

of The Guild: work for others in a setting of Christian harmony.

In 1937 the work of The Guild was extended to include sewing and work projects for Overbrook Church.

During World War II The Guild enlarged its efforts to include both gifts of money and the work of their hands for wartime service and increasing amounts of sewing for hospitals. The Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia and the hospital in Miraj, India, were in desperate need of supplies all during that trying period, and Overbrook women did their utmost to keep the gauze work and hospital garments in good supply at these hospitals.

In March of 1953, the secretary made her last entry for The Guild. A new day had come for the women of Overbrook Church; they had decided to reorganize according to the plan suggested by the denomination and form a Women's Association.

#### THE AUXILIARY

In 1926, shortly after the Church House was completed, it was felt that there should be a group organized which would have for its special concern the supervision of the housekeeping and furnishings of the building. Some of the younger women were encouraged to take this responsibility and it was from this small, initial group that the Auxiliary was formed—an organization which shortly grew to between seventy or eighty members. From the beginning, the Auxiliary was a *working* organization.

One of the first projects was the management of the Fellowship Dinners which were held two or three times a year for the entire congregation. The at-

tendance at these dinners was from three to four hundred. Planning the menu, ordering food, and preparing and serving the meal, was no small task. The Auxiliary featured the annual family turkey dinner held early in December each year in connection with the all-day Christmas Bazaar.

Every fall the women's activities opened with a Birthday Luncheon and each spring the women of the Auxiliary held a lawn party and tea on the terrace behind the manse.

A monthly work-day was part of the regular program of the Auxiliary. The group purchased bolts of damask from which they made the long table-cloths for the church use. The Auxiliary also purchased equipment needed for the kitchen including a steam table. On one occasion they raised nearly \$1,400, a goodly share of which was spent for the kitchen supplies and equipment, material for draperies for the Church House, and other furnishings.

The Auxiliary instituted Mrs. George Emerson Barnes' "book talks." In 1948 the Spring Luncheons were started in connection with the last book talk of the season. Fifty people came to the first Spring Luncheon; now an average attendance is about two hundred.

In 1949 the Auxiliary furnished a room in the Cathcart Home down to every last detail. It continues to be maintained by the present Women's Association.

Another assignment accepted by the Auxiliary was that of caring for the altar flowers and for the Communion elements. One of the last projects of the Auxiliary was to purchase draperies for the Chapel, as the Wistar Morris Room is often called. When the group



disbanded at the time the Women's Association was formed, the funds remaining in the treasury were used to purchase new cabinets for the kitchen, a sink, and a stove.

#### THE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

In the fall of 1950, the Evening Auxiliary, which was composed of business women and a few homemakers, became interested in the Association Plan of the Presbyterian Women's Organization. They wanted to explore the feasibility of having this type of organization at Overbrook Church. After much thought, the members set up a series of workshops to which all the women of the church were invited. The purpose was to study the Association Plan. Through the winter of 1951 the women continued their careful research, listening and talking about the new idea. They continued on into the spring, when the women finally decided to ask the pastor to assist them in the formation of a Women's Association at Overbrook Church.

All Overbrook women were invited to the panel discussion. The discussion meeting was well attended and people felt free to discuss the pros and cons of the question. Those who had recently transferred from churches having the Association Plan spoke highly of it; others, fearing the loss of identity of individual organizations at Overbrook, questioned this larger type of organization. A resumé of the evening's discussion was sent to every woman in the church, together with a reply postal card on which a ballot was printed. Each person was asked to record her vote. An overwhelming majority was in favor of the Association Plan.

Mrs. John V. Calhoun, president of the Women's Council, the over-all organization for the four existing



women's societies, appointed a committee to draft a constitution and draw up by-laws. These were presented to the Session which approved the plan. Each of the four organizations voted separately on the constitution and by-laws; each registered its independent decision to become a part of the new organization. Then came the business of merging the treasuries, and of electing officers for the new Overbrook Women's Association. The departmental plan was adopted, embracing: Fellowship, Program, World Service, and Local Church activities. Eleven circles, three of which met in the evening, were formed by the simple process of drawing names to determine the membership of the various circles.

The purpose of the Overbrook Women's Association is identical with that of all Presbyterian Women's Organizations: to further the work of the Kingdom of God by uniting with the women of the Presbyterian Church in spiritual fellowship, through a program of education, service, prayer, and benevolence. This purpose is carried out in the Association meetings, held once a month, and consisting of programs which are educational, religious and social. At the monthly circle meetings the studies are rounded out by worship and service projects.

Important also, is the work of the local church itself. At Overbrook, it is carried on with the aid of committees which are built into the Association program. Among these are the House Committee and Choir Mothers, to give just two examples. Through its circles the Association supervises the weekly coffee hour which follows the eleven o'clock church service.

The Association gives three thousand dollars annually to the Boards of National Missions, Ecumeni-

cal Missions, and Christian Education. Hundreds of articles are made for Presbyterian hospitals and institutions both at home and abroad. Sewing and gauze work is carried on during the morning of the monthly Association meeting day and at circle meetings.

All women in the congregation are invited to become members of the Overbrook Women's Association. Individual interests, talents, and abilities are used by the Association in furthering Christian objectives.

The Women's Association is affiliated with the Philadelphia Presbyterial Society which is composed of the women's organizations of more than a hundred and seventy Presbyterian Churches. It is related to the National Council of Presbyterian Women, and one or more delegates attend the Quadrennial Meeting of Presbyterian Women at Purdue University.

Overbrook Presbyterian Church women, through their large and efficient Association, are able to work together for the cause of the Church of Christ. Consecration of minds, spirits, and the work of their hands, goes from Overbrook Church into all the world through this Association, thus furthering the Kingdom of God on earth.

\* \* \*

#### THE OVERBROOK MEN'S ASSOCIATION

On October 26, 1899, a group of seventeen men of the congregation met at the manse to effect organization of the "Men's Association of the Overbrook Presbyterian Church." Mr. Louis Whitney presided at this organizational meeting and after discussing the routine to be adopted, the following officers were

elected: J. Claude Bedford, President; James A. McCurdy and A. A. Brown, Vice Presidents; William B. Montgomery, Treasurer; and George A. Supplee, Secretary.

The stated purpose was "to aid in the Religious, Philanthropic and Social Work of the church." To carry out these purposes, committees were appointed for Ushering, To Receive Offerings, To Welcome Strangers, Devotional, Printing and Manuals, to name a few. Members agreed to nominal dues of one dollar per year and "monthly meetings on the fourth Tuesday."

The attendance seldom exceeded twenty but in the young church the potential membership was limited. Numbers seemed not to deter them. They worked as dedicated men in accordance with the accepted purpose of the Association and in keeping with the adopted motto, suggested by Dr. Wharton, their first speaker: "I must work the work of Him who sent me, while it is day, for the night cometh."

Among their early accomplishments were the preparing and printing of a church membership manual and the furnishing of a library for the Sunday School.

This group was ever willing and solicitous of opportunities to serve the church. Taking special interest in missions, members contributed generously to that cause. Not only the spiritual, but also the physical property of the church received their attention, as evidenced by this record of a meeting held November 27, 1900: "On motion it was decided that the next regular meeting, in January, would be a night set aside for decorating the church."

For many years the Men's Association continued to function primarily as church needs and attentions dic-

tated, with little time given to social or entertainment activities. In the early "Twenties," for example, the members worked as a visiting committee to increase the church membership and otherwise give help and assistance to the pastor. To encourage and interest the boys and younger men, they furnished a recreation and meeting room in the church basement.

#### ASSOCIATION CHANGES ITS NAME AND ACTIVITIES

In the "Thirties" the Association seemed to be influenced by a somewhat changed attitude as to programs for meetings. More emphasis was placed on entertainment and fellowship. This motto was added to the Association stationery: "To have friends, a man must show himself to be friendly." Men of neighboring churches were invited to attend meetings and as this idea grew popular and proved rewarding, it was deemed wise to change the name by deleting the word "Presbyterian" and continue to be known merely as the Overbrook Men's Association. The change was motivated by a desire to make attendance by men of the community with other church affiliation more inviting and with no possible feeling, by other churches, that this was an attempt at proselyting. The attendance at meetings rapidly increased to average one hundred. Fellowship was the key, and it worked. The entire program of meetings was designed on a non-denominational basis. This idea was not born in the mind of any one member but seemed to be the natural outgrowth of an understanding that the Overbrook Presbyterian Church offered it's facilities for the improvement and enjoyment of the community, and all were welcome. New members were attracted to the church through the Association.



## MEN'S ASSOCIATION PROGRAMS

For years the October meeting was used as what might be called "a kick off" for the fall season. Dinner was prepared by the ladies of the church and served by the young people. Frequently the capacities were overtaxed, as attendance mounted to two hundred and more. Some vocal and some instrumental music was always a part of the program but the main attraction was a speaker of national, and even international, reputation.

For a while the program was divided into two parts. The first part was devoted to interests on the lighter side and the last half to the more serious subjects presented by competent speakers. For instance, one meeting was devoted to instruction in wrestling. Padded mats were obtained from the Y. M. C. A. and two professional wrestlers gave demonstrations on the various holds. Several of the members volunteered and participated in the demonstrations. At another meeting the Valley Forge Military Academy sent a group of cadets to demonstrate special drill maneuvers and so forth. No one of the over two hundred men present will probably ever forget the meeting at which the guest was an expert in Falconry, who brought with him two hooded falcons, which engaged in interesting demonstrations. After the lighter portions of the evenings' programs the members would settle back in their chairs and enjoy the speaker of the evening. During the World War years, many of the speakers had actually engaged in combat and/or were engaged in various phases of the war effort. Some of the members, returned from combat, were inspiring in their recitation of combat experience—an Air Ace, one captured in the Battle of the Bulge, another a survivor from the torpedoed USS Princeton.

The Association grew in influence and appeal to the men of the Community. Not only were the regular meetings redesigned to attract the men but so were the especially arranged Ladies' Night meetings. The large numbers attending these nights for the ladies frequently overflowed into adjoining rooms and corridors. One such night was planned for just fun and all of the talent was drawn from the membership.

As this new plan of meetings expanded and grew in popularity, it became necessary to expand and redesign the entire administrative organization. New committees were created, such as Attendance, Publicity, Membership, Welcoming, Program, Badge Table, and Oscar the Chef. The latter, as might be guessed, arranged for the refreshments which were served during the social hour that followed the meetings.

Speakers were sought from all faiths. Many remember the talks given by Judge Vincent A. Carroll, a ranking lay member of the Roman Catholic Church, a neighbor and friend of Overbrook, and by Rabbi W. H. Fineshriber who spoke on two occasions before large audiences.

#### THE ASSOCIATION IS DISCONTINUED

World War II ended and service men from Overbrook, over two hundred in number, returned to home and family. Some few immediately resumed their interest and activity in the Association, but the majority failed to do so. Although the falling off in attendance was not, at first, ascribed to after-war changed interests, the effect was most real and in spite of the best efforts of a fine array of loyal and devoted officers, the declining interest in Association activities continued through the early 50's.

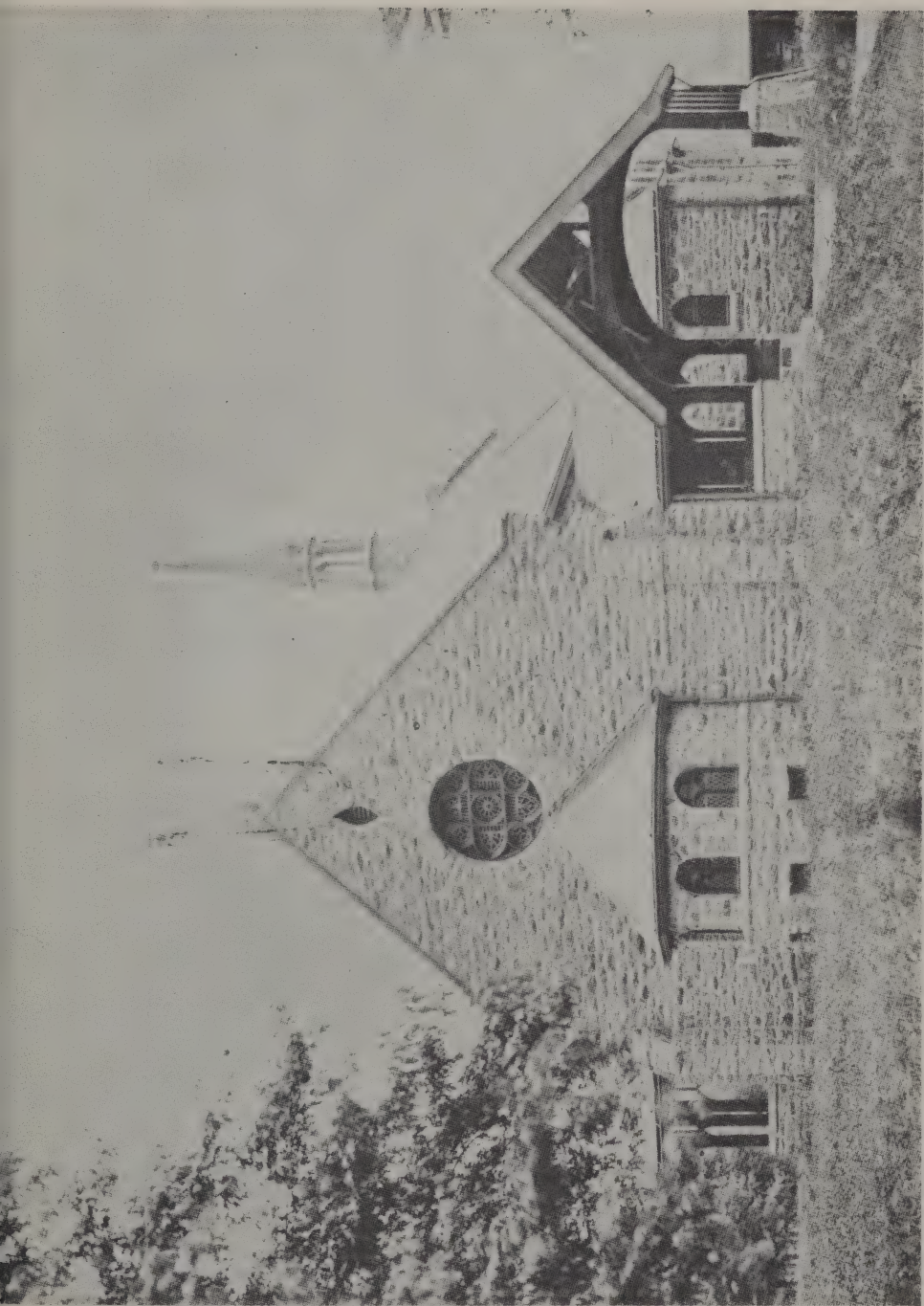
For many of those who entertained fond memories of outstanding accomplishments "of not too many years ago," evenings of fun, entertainment, sociability and friendship, it was found most difficult to accept the inevitable and agree to a suspension of activity of this fine Association.

It was with much reluctance, and with a sincere hope that a spark may again be found to rekindle from the ashes of the old a bigger and more effective Overbrook Men's Association, that the Session discontinued the Association in May, 1957, after fifty-eight years of service.

*O living Church, thine errand speed,  
Fulfill thy task sublime;  
With bread of life earth's hungers feed;  
Redeem the evil time*







ORIGINAL CHURCH--1890





OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AND MANSE.  
FROM CITY LINE—1892





CHANCEL AND ORGAN—1905



CHANCEL.—1940



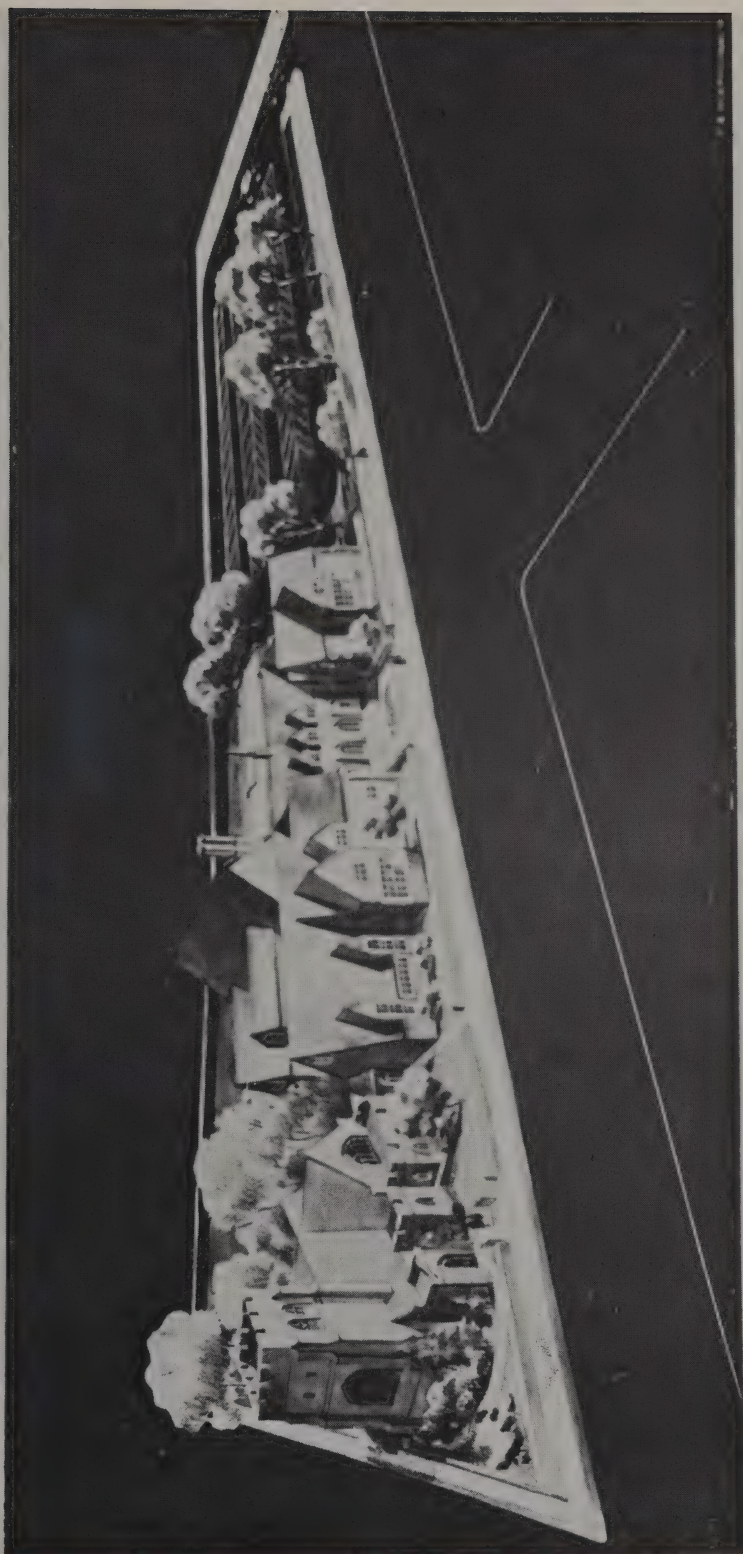


A TYPICAL WEDDING



GEORGE EMERSON BARNES MEMORIAL WINDOW—1956





CHURCH, CHURCH SCHOOL AND PARKING AREA—1958



#### MEMORIAL WINDOW

To the 226 service men and women from Overbrook Presbyterian Church who served in the Armed Forces in World War II—Dedicated 1949.



## In Memoriam

### *LEST WE FORGET*

The following men of Overbrook Presbyterian Church, who gave their lives to God and country while in the nation's service, are gratefully remembered:

|                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| THOMAS N. AIKEN        | JOHN F. GILKESON       |
| ERDMANN ELLIS BRANDT   | WILLIAM E. JOHNSON     |
| HENRY B. BRIGGS        | WARD T. KANE           |
| ROBERT H. CHRISTY      | EVERETT B. MOSIER      |
| JOHN CLEMENTS          | EDWIN S. S. NEELY      |
| WILLIAM DIETJEN        | GEORGE W. SCHULTZ, JR. |
| WILLIAM B. FULTON      | RAYMOND T. TURN        |
| CLAYTON M. WHITE, III. |                        |





THE SESSION—1958

*Front row*, left to right: Harold W. Scott, Delbert B. Gray, Jr., Dr. Alvin Duane Smith, the Rev. Guy M. Kinman, Jr., William W. Tomlinson, William H. Harman, Jr.

*Second row*: Charles U. Shellenberger, Joseph P. Echternach, III, John A. Robbins, Henry J. Kaltenthaler, Jr., John L. C. Ulrich.

*Third row*: Joseph F. Eshelman, Robert J. Hunter, S. Howard Patterson, Hugh Robertson.

*Last row*: John P. Holden, John V. Calhoun, George L. Vonder Lindt, J. Renwick Hogg, Jr., Clerk of Session. (Not present: Raymond I. Haskell.)





# THE ELDERS

## OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

| NAME                      | DATES OF SERVICE |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| * William T. Harris       | 1890-1935        |
| * John B. Gest            | 1895-1907        |
| * Theophilis S. Shoemaker | 1900-1936        |
| * George W. Magee         | 1900-1943        |
| * A. G. Butler            | 1904-1917        |
| * Harvey E. Platt         | 1907-1930        |
| * Evan G. Chandlee        | 1908-1920        |
| * William C. Fleck        | 1923-1930        |
| Delbert B. Gray, Jr.      | 1923-            |
| * J. Renwick Hogg         | 1923-1941        |
| * Leroy M. Lewis          | 1920-1930        |
| * Alfred Percival Smith   | 1917-1944        |
| * Walter M. Wood          | 1921-1941        |
| William H. Beach          | 1931-1947        |
| * William S. Furst        | 1931-1933        |
| * William R. Neely        | 1931-1946        |
| * D. Robertson Fiske      | 1934-1951        |
| S. Howard Patterson       | 1934-            |
| John L. C. Ulrich         | 1934-            |
| * J. Burt Van Dyke        | 1939-1948        |
| J. Renwick Hogg, Jr.      | 1941-            |
| William W. Tomlinson      | 1942-            |
| * James T. Gilmore        | 1942-1955        |
| * Rudolph H. Durnell      | 1944-1952        |
| * William K. Miller       | 1944-1951        |
| * John K. Rittenhouse     | 1945-1952        |
| Raymond I. Haskell        | 1946-            |
| John A. Robbins           | 1946-            |

(\* Deceased)

| NAME                     | DATES OF SERVICE |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Charles U. Shellenberger | 1947-            |
| Joseph F. Eshelman       | 1950-            |
| Hugh Robertson           | 1950-            |
| Harold W. Scott          | 1950-            |
| Henry J. Kaltenthaler    | 1952-            |
| Joseph P. Echternach     | 1953-            |
| William H. Harman, Jr.   | 1953-            |
| * Fred Geiger            | 1953-1957        |
| George Vonder Lindt      | 1956-            |
| J. V. Calhoun            | 1957-            |
| John P. Holden           | 1957-            |
| Robert J. Hunter         | 1958-            |





#### THE BOARD OF DEACONS—1958

*Front row, left to right:* The Rev. Guy M. Kinman, Jr., John DeWitt Beattie, Osborne R. Roberts, *Chairman*, Arthur DeSimone, Dr. Alvin Duane Smith.

*Second row:* Theophilus Rowlands, Mrs. Richard F. Heylman, Mrs. John Porter Scott, William B. Reynolds.

*Third row:* Malvin B. Wallace, I. Windel Hunter, Mont L. Haible, *Secretary*, Austin Homer.

*Last row:* James G. Calhoun, *Vice-Chairman*, Joseph M. Fox, Jr.

*Not present:* Harry K. Butcher, Alfred M. Hoffman, Joel B. Justin, William W. Plank, Charles H. Yardley, *Treasurer*.



# THE DEACONS

## OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

| NAME                     | DATES OF SERVICE |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| Irvin R. Barton          | 1944-1956        |
| * William B. Brendlinger | 1944-1951        |
| Reuel S. Burr            | 1944-1956        |
| * Joseph Echternach      | 1944-1944        |
| * Cuyler C. Hazlett      | 1944-1956        |
| Alfred M. Hoffman        | 1944-            |
| Raymond I. Haskell       | 1944-1945        |
| Henry J. Kalenthaler     | 1944-1952        |
| James W. McIntyre        | 1944-1956        |
| * William Murray         | 1944-1944        |
| John A. Robbins          | 1944-1945        |
| Hugh Robertson           | 1944-1950        |
| * William G. Shaner      | 1944-1955        |
| James L. Weatherwax      | 1944-1950        |
| W. Dean Stapp            | 1945-1950        |
| Joseph Eshelman          | 1945-1950        |
| David Bean               | 1945-1953        |
| George W. Magee, Jr.     | 1946-1955        |
| Joseph Echternach, Jr.   | 1946-1954        |
| Charles H. Yardley       | 1950-            |
| * Walter Dieroff         | 1950-1955        |
| James B. Doak            | 1950-1955        |
| * Robert J. Crawford     | 1950-1955        |
| George Vonder Lindt      | 1952-1956        |
| Joel B. Justin           | 1953-            |
| Osborne Roberts          | 1953-            |
| John D. Beattie          | 1953-            |
| John J. Herd             | 1953-1956        |

(\* Deceased)



| NAME                   | DATES OF SERVICE |
|------------------------|------------------|
| I. Windel Hunter       | 1954-            |
| Malvin B. Wallace      | 1954-            |
| James G. Calhoun       | 1955-            |
| Joseph M. Fox, Jr.     | 1955-            |
| William W. Plank       | 1955-            |
| Mrs. John Porter Scott | 1955-            |
| Austin Homer           | 1956-            |
| William B. Reynolds    | 1956-            |
| Mont L. Haible         | 1956-            |
| Arnaud E. Pausser      | 1956-1958        |
| Harry K. Butcher       | 1956-            |
| Mrs. Richard Heylmun   | 1956-            |
| Arthur E. DeSimone     | 1957-            |
| Theophilus Rowlands    | 1958-            |



THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES—1958

*Seated, left to right:* Milton C. Jackson, Herman D. West, *Treasurer*, Lester L. Lessig, *Vice-President*, Lester W. Minchin, *President*, David W. Coates, *Secretary*, Harold C. Seward.

*Second row:* Haig H. Pakradooni, Jr., Joseph M. Cook, Boyd T. Barnard, Frederick A. Bothe, J. Warren Hundley, W. Dewees Yeager.

*Last row:* Sydney V. Young, Seth D. Seltzer, Jr., Walter C. Dambman, Jr., James B. Doak, W. Dean Stapp, Jesse R. Wike, James W. McIntyre.

*Not present:* Irvin R. Barton, John R. Edwards, John J. Herd, Roger C. Whiteman.



# THE TRUSTEES

## OVERBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

| NAME                      | DATES OF SERVICE |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| * Wistar Morris           | 1890-1891        |
| * Frank A. Harris         | 1890-1893        |
| * Samuel Croft            | 1890-1917        |
| * George W. Barr          | 1890-1901        |
| * John B. Gest            | 1891-1902        |
| * Rev. Charles Wood       | 1891-1898        |
| * William P. Henszey      | 1891-1906        |
| * Joseph G. Harrison      | 1891-1894        |
| * William T. Harris       | 1891-1921        |
| * William J. Wilson       | 1891-1931        |
| * I. Layton Register      | 1893-1897        |
| * George H. Freedley      | 1894-1903        |
| * Charles H. Harding      | 1897-1900        |
| * John H. Morice          | 1898-1908        |
| * Theophilus S. Shoemaker | 1900-1902        |
| * James A. McCurdy        | 1902-1922        |
| * J. Claude Bedford       | 1902-1906        |
| * Herman Hessenbruch      | 1901-1914        |
| * William P. Gest         | 1903-1904        |
| * William S. Furst        | 1904-1925        |
| * Harry W. Bremer         | 1907-1925        |
| * Thomas E. Murphy        | 1907-1910        |
| * George W. Magee         | 1908-1919        |
| * John Marshall Gest      | 1909-1924        |
| * Edward S. Hyde          | 1910-1933        |
| * George H. Supplee       | 1910-1919        |
| * Robert Haig             | 1910-1918        |
| * Clarence H. Geist       | 1912-1929        |

(\* Deceased)



| NAME                     | DATES OF SERVICE |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| * Charles T. Audenreid   | 1912-1914        |
| * Samuel P. Rodgers      | 1914-1928        |
| * James H. Windrim       | 1915-1919        |
| * Henry Delaplaine       | 1917-1934        |
| William DeKraft          | 1919-1922        |
| * Frederick A. Rakestraw | 1919-1937        |
| George W. Curran         | 1919-1942        |
| * William B. Montgomery  | 1919-1944        |
| * Charles P. Vaughan     | 1919-1936        |
| * C. Henderson Supplee   | 1922-1934        |
| * George R. McAbee       | 1922-1932        |
| * Frank M. Hardt         | 1923-1949        |
| * Edgar W. Nicholson     | 1925-1951        |
| * James A. Longwell      | 1926-1940        |
| * Paul A. Davis, 3rd     | 1927-1936        |
| * Samuel L. Clark        | 1933-1952        |
| * Emlen Craft            | 1933-1936        |
| Theodore Campbell, Jr.   | 1934-1952        |
| Boyd T. Barnard          | 1935-            |
| * Fred Geiger            | 1931-1957        |
| John V. Calhoun          | 1935-1957        |
| Joseph J. Klumpp         | 1937-1958        |
| * Charles W. Swing       | 1937-1938        |
| * William R. Hughes, Jr. | 1938-1956        |
| * William A. Martin      | 1939-1943        |
| Lester W. Minchin        | 1939-            |
| Herman O. West           | 1939-            |
| Ross P. Chamberlin       | 1941-1952        |
| Milton C. Jackson        | 1941-            |
| Lester L. Lessig         | 1942-            |
| Jesse R. Wike            | 1942-            |
| * Walter W. Hess         | 1944-1955        |
| Harold C. Seward         | 1944-            |
| C. R. C. Custer          | 1946-1952        |
| Arthur R. Cannon         | 1949-1957        |

| NAME                    | DATES OF SERVICE |
|-------------------------|------------------|
| Frederick A. Bothe      | 1951-            |
| * Frank Beemer          | 1952-1958        |
| W. Dewees Yeager        | 1952-            |
| James Doak              | 1955-            |
| Fred Geiger, Jr.        | 1955-1956        |
| David W. Coates         | 1955-            |
| Irvin R. Barton         | 1956-            |
| John J. Herd            | 1956-            |
| J. Warren Hundley       | 1956-            |
| James W. McIntyre       | 1956-            |
| Joseph M. Cook          | 1957-            |
| Walter C. Dambman, Jr.  | 1957-            |
| John R. Edwards         | 1957-            |
| W. Dean Stapp           | 1957-            |
| Sidney V. Young         | 1957-            |
| Haig H. Pakradooni, Jr. | 1958-            |
| Seth D. Seltzer         | 1958-            |
| Roger C. Whiteman       | 1958-            |



## CHRONOLOGY OF BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENTS

### I—ORIGINAL CHURCH BUILDINGS

- 1889—Original cornerstone laid October 31  
(Estimated value of building with land:  
\$20,000)
- 1890—Building dedicated February 13
- 1892—Manse completed
- 1892—Electric lights installed in the church
- 1893—Final payment of \$10,989 made on Manse,  
January 30
- 1899—Committee appointed to secure pipe  
organ (Subscriptions received and organ,  
complete with motor, purchased for  
\$2255)
- 1900—Special meeting on May 25th to consider  
enlargement of Church

### II—CHURCH ENLARGED; NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL BUILDING

- 1902—On January 7th architects were author-  
ized to complete plans for altering the  
church: \$11,000 (A new Sunday School  
Building: \$8,000 to \$11,000)
- 1903—Committee authorized to proceed with  
above building, October 12th
- 1905—Building committee reported completion  
of building, October 4 (Tower erected and  
Sunday School built—all debts paid. Cost  
of building with changes and equipment:  
\$33,000. Ladies contributed carpet and  
other furnishings. Catherine D. Wentz  
gave a memorial window, west transept  
toward City Line Ave. Building fund re-



- ceived \$34,117. A balance of \$888. after all debts were paid, was used to install a new heating plant at the Manse.)
- 1908—The Wentz memorial window replaced by the Albert Barnes window (west transept)
- 1912—January 17th—\$950 spent to enlarge the organ
- February 23rd—recommendation unanimously adopted to enlarge the Sunday School at estimated \$4,410
- April 17th—Committee authorized removal of one-half of the carriage sheds
- 1913—May—Enlargement of Sunday School completion. Total cost \$7,265.
- 1915—Seating capacity of church floor 373; balcony 42; Total 415
- 1920—On January 20th, Misses Catherine and Margaret Brooks offered a memorial window in memory of Mr. and Mrs. J. H. A. Brooks. Offer accepted by Board of Trustees
- 1922—Balance of carriage sheds removed, March 22nd

### III—CHURCH HOUSE AND MEMORIAL CHANCEL

- 1924—Building committee authorized to proceed with building and new Sunday School, May 21st
- 1925—Building Committee instructed to ask for bids on new Sunday School Building on April 26
- Committee authorized to place contract with Henry E. Baton for erection of Sunday School Building at cost of \$199,000 on May 13

- Three memorial windows from the Wistar Morris Home accepted from Mr. Morris Wood, on October 30 and installed in the west face of the tower  
(Replaced by War Memorial window in 1948)  
Cost of new Sunday School Building complete \$247,234
- 1934—City widened City Line Avenue; Porte  
1935—City widened Lancaster Avenue  
cochere removed
- 1939—Fiftieth Anniversary  
New Organ, new pulpit arrangement, new lighting system, new hymnals—all memorial gifts. Wall behind organ torn out and extended to accommodate new organ and altar—total cost \$43,795
- 1939—November 19th, new chancel dedicated  
—December 6th, new organ dedicated
- 1946—December 3, special committee decided on a stained glass window for a War Memorial. Contract for window placed with Willet Stained Glass Company
- 1948—Window installed during Spring and Summer. Cost \$5,000. Limestone framework for window and other changes \$2,500; total cost \$7,500
- 1953—Lighting of memorial window and tower donated by member
- 1953—New modern drop lighting for Sanctuary given by Mr. Ross Chamberlain, Trustee
- 1953—Purchase of adjoining property for parking lot. Pavement for this completed in 1954
- 1954—George Emerson Barnes memorial window installed











